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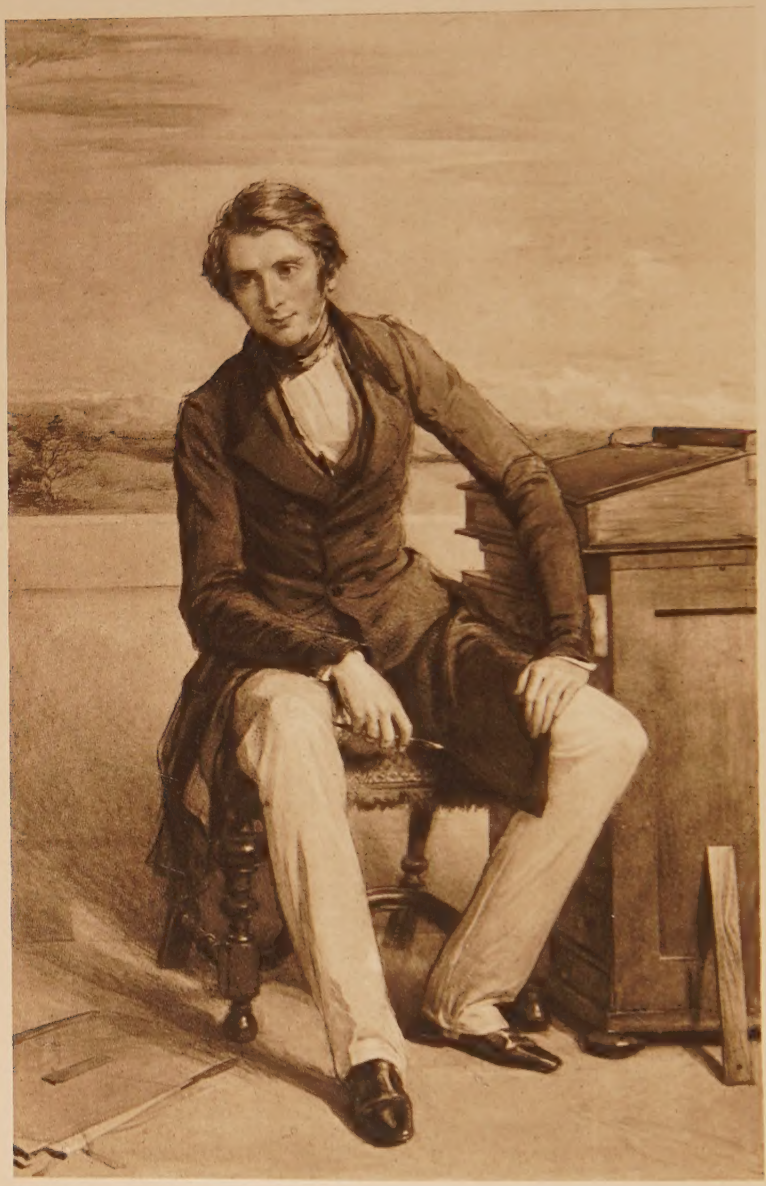
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THE LIFE OF JOHN RUSKIN


GEORGE ALLEN
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G. Richmond

The Author of "Modern Painters"

1843

THE LIFE OF
JOHN RUSKIN

BY

E. T. COOK

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I

1819–1860

WITH PORTRAITS

SECOND EDITION

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PREFATORY NOTE

The principal material on which this Biography is founded consists of Ruskin's diaries, note-books, and letters which have been placed at my disposal by his executors. The diaries, though some years and events are not included, are a main authority for the Life. They are supplemented by a large collection of letters to his parents, which are preserved at Brantwood. During Ruskin's absences from home, he wrote almost daily, and sometimes more than once a day, to his father, or to his mother, or to both The letters to his father (who died in 1864) are fuller than those to his mother. After her death in 1871, their place is partly taken by letters to Mrs. Arthur Severn, to whose friendly assistance I am much indebted. Letters to many other correspondents are also used in this Biography; and I am especially grateful to the family of the late Professor Norton, and to his publishers, Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company, for their kind and gracious permission to make large use of his letters.

Other important material for a Life of Ruskin is to be found in his own books, and especially in *Præterita* and *Fors Clavigera*. Upon this material also I have been allowed by his executors to draw unreservedly. *Præterita* is only a fragment of autobiography. It deals hardly at all with Ruskin's later years; and, in the years with which it does deal, it leaves many gaps. It is fullest in the record of his childhood. My first two chapters might have been made much longer, but that *Præterita* covers the ground. Here and there, both in those chapters and elsewhere, I have quoted from it; but as far as possible I have drawn upon autobiographical passages scattered elsewhere in Ruskin's writings. The "Autobiographical Notes," which are occasionally quoted, are manuscript passages not included by

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Ruskin in the published text of *Præterita*, but intended by him for the projected continuation of it or for its subsidiary *Dilecta*.

Among hitherto published biographical studies of Ruskin, the books which have most authority are Mr. W. G. Collingwood's *Life and Work of Ruskin* and *Ruskin Relics*. Every student of Ruskin must feel himself to be under a deep debt of gratitude to the author of those excellent books. The literature of Ruskiniana is vast. My bibliography in the Library Edition of his Works enumerates more than 1200 items under that head. I cannot honestly say that I have read every one of those books, pamphlets, and articles; but I have probably read more of them than most other persons have. In every case where I have used information or other material thus derived, I have intended to express my obligation by reference. If I have anywhere failed to do so, it is by inadvertence for which I here offer apology.

The late Mr. George Allen gave me some personal reminiscences of his long connexion with Ruskin: and these have been supplemented, since Mr. Allen's death, by his diary, extracts from which were made for me by his daughter, Miss Grace Allen.

I have the pleasant duty of thanking my friend. Mr. Alexander Wedderburn, for reading the proofs of this book, for supplying me with several reminiscences of Ruskin. and for making many valuable suggestions.

E. T. C.

September 1911.

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Facsimile of the MS. of the Opening Passage of "The Stones of Venice" . . . . . *Between pp.* 362, 363

Introductory

The life of Ruskin was, as he said of it, "persistently literary."[1] The biography of him must be the account, mainly, of a character, a temperament, an influence; and seldom, of events on the stage of public action. He himself would have deemed this limitation not disadvantageous. "Lives in which the public are interested," he wrote, "are scarcely ever worth writing. For the most part compulsorily artificial, often affectedly so,—on the whole, fortunate beyond ordinary rule,—and, so far as the men are really greater than others, unintelligible to the common reader,—the lives of statesmen, soldiers, authors, artists, or any one habitually set in the sight of many, tell us at last little more than what sort of people they dealt with, and of pens they wrote with; the personal life is inscrutably broken up,—often contemptibly, and the external aspect of it merely a husk, at the best."[2] A biographer of Ruskin is free from some of these disabilities.

Ruskin's life was not lived in the public eye, but he was frankly communicative. In letters and diaries, as well as in his fragment of autobiography and in many a page of his other books, he left behind him much intimate material. If there be anything unintelligible in his life, it is not for lack of self-revelation. The lives worth writing, he thought, are those about which truth can be told in the greatest of sciences, that of Humanity; and which reveal what is "beautiful or woful" in an individual soul.

There is little temptation, again, to dwell too much in any biography of Ruskin upon the people he dealt with or the pens he wrote with. There is indeed a certain interest

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 85. [2] Preface to *The Story of Ida*, 1883.

in the case of a master in any of the arts in knowing something of his methods, and I shall devote a chapter or two to such topics. Yet among great writers Ruskin was one of the least dependent upon particular methods, apparatus, tricks, or surroundings. He wrote anywhere, anyhow, with anything, and on everything.

Ruskin's dealings with persons were of comparatively little moment. He had, indeed, many distinguished friends, especially among artists and men of letters, and the story of his friendships will be found, I hope, to be among the more interesting threads in this biography; but the interest centres largely around Ruskin himself. He met also, and had some personal acquaintance with, men of fame outside his own immediate circle. We shall catch glimpses in this book of Marshal Radetsky; of Archdukes and Grand Duchesses and British Royal Highnesses; of Rubini and Taglioni and Jenny Lind; of Forbes and Buckland and Darwin; of Manning, of Gladstone, and of Disraeli. And, more summarily, it may here be recorded that Ruskin "formed one of a worshipful concourse invited by the Bunsen family to hear them talk Bunsenese"; that he saw the Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce) "taught by Sir Robert Inglis to drink sherry cobbler through a straw"; that he 'heard Macaulay spout the first chapter of Isaiah without understanding a syllable of it";[1] and that he was invited to go down to Broadlands with Lord Palmerston, who received him much as Lord Oldborough receives Mr. Temple in Miss Edgeworth's *Patronage*, and, at dinner, cross-examined him playfully upon the wildest of his political theories. But all such encounters were incidental and significant of little. The success of *Modern Painters* gave the author entrance to the polite circles of London; but "at that time," he said, "even more than now (1888) it was a mere torment and horror to me to talk to big people whom I didn't care about." And in the later period of his life he mixed very little even in literary or artistic circles. "It seldom chances," he said, "my work lying chiefly among stones, clouds, and flowers, that I am brought into any freedom of

[1] *Præterita*, vol. iii. §§ 28, 29.

intercourse with my fellow-creatures."[1] Still less did he mix at any period in public affairs. He made a glory in what I fear that some of my readers may consider his shame; namely, that he had never given, and never meant to give, a parliamentary vote in his life.[2] He "knew so little," he said, "of public life and saw so little of the men who are engaged in it," that he was "guilty of a misunderstanding of Mr. Gladstone's character"[3] as "total" as—well, as that of some who had not a like excuse. Ruskin's life, then, was private and secluded. A biography of him must be the story of a soul, or be of nothing worth.

The development of Ruskin's character and mind, the nature of his temperament, and their encounter with the world will, then, be one main theme of this biography. The theme is ample; for Ruskin's life, though in an external sense empty of events, was in another sense as full as any of which we have record. His life, like his style, is distinguished above all things by abounding vitality; for his closing years are not rightly to be accounted part of his "life," they were but a long-drawn-out stage of death. In no author who has written so much as Ruskin can so few words be found which are otiose, so few passages which are spiritless; and, similarly, in his life, I doubt whether from his first articulate years to his last there was an empty or an idle moment in them. He was, indeed, a creature of moods; the same eager sensibility that gave him exaltation brought in reaction an equal despondency. But he liked and disliked, he hoped and despaired, ever with the same consuming intensity. He could find occupation anywhere, and beauty everywhere; in the simplest and commonest effects of nature, no less than in the most brilliant. Mrs. Severn remembers walking with Ruskin, when she was a young girl, and seeing him stoop low down and glance sidewise at the sky. "Do you put your head down here," he said, "and you will see what I see." So she bent down also, and saw what he had seen—"the wondrous loveliness

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 7 (1871). [2] *Ibid.*, Letter 29.
[3] *Ibid.*, Letter 57.

of a tree's buds against the sky." "I cannot explain to you," he said in one of his later Oxford lectures, "what a deep element of life, for me, is in the sight merely of pure sunshine on a bank of living grass. More than any pathetic music,—yet I love music,—more than any artful colour—and yet I love colour,—more than any other merely material thing visible to these old eyes, in earth or sky."[1] When he wrote of the world that "God had placed its real happiness in the keeping of the little mosses of the wayside and of the clouds of the firmament,"[2] he was recording a fact of his own experience of life. Every cause which he took up, every interest which successively engaged him—painting, architecture, sculpture or missals, rocks, shells, flowers or birds, mythology, music or economics — aroused the same enthusiasm, whether in admiration or in rebuke. He lived, as he wrote, at white-heat. If, as Mr. Pater says, "to burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy," be "success in life," then was Ruskin's life successful above common measure.

But Ruskin lived not only for art's sake; and our theme is full of the tragi-comedy of human life: abounding in conflicts of duties, in tragic disappointments, in an almost comic disproportion, sometimes, between means and ends. We shall see Ruskin, endowed with exquisite sensibility, and possessed by a love of beauty so passionate that he burnt to make all the world participate in his vision. With him this love of beauty was inextricably mixed with the beauty of holiness. Two sides of his nature were at first at strife. He found for himself a reconciliation: and believed, in the first rush of his enthusiasm, that he had only to write, in order to convert the world. The enthusiast for beauty was cast into the midst of a material age. He did not convert the world, and he turned to rail at it. Instincts of compassion, at first dormant in his nature, were awakened, and the same sensibility that opened the

[1] *Art of England*, § 11.

[2] See the passage cited in Vol. II. chap. xxxii.

beauty of the world to him impressed upon him with intolerable force its load of misery. Ill equipped, and giving only half his energies to the work, he sought to redeem the misery, and his life seemed to him to end in failure.

The story of Ruskin's private fortunes, and of the development of his character, have also their elements of tragic circumstance. The earlier period of his life was tied in a relation with his parents closer than falls to the lot of most men. They had for him unbounded affection, and he for them ungrudging deference; but it was "an exquisite piece of tragedy altogether," said Ruskin, of his father's death—"the loss of a father who would have sacrificed his life for his son, and yet forced his son to sacrifice his life to him, and sacrifice it in vain."[1] "The men capable," he said, "of the highest imaginative passion are always tossed on fiery waves by it"[2]; his own experience in love shows every element of the comic or tragic irony of life—a grand passion in boyhood which left a scar not the less wounding because it was partly ludicrous; a marriage in early manhood which was brief and unhappy; an abiding love in middle age which was denied its fruition by the most cruel irony. Tragedy more exquisite, as we shall see, than the other! If life be the school of character, Ruskin was well lessoned. We shall hear his own account of the influences which moulded his character favourably and unfavourably in early years; and afterwards the course of our story will show the many gifts, graces, and virtues which illuminated his life. Yet Ruskin's character was not one of those which seem raised above the level of humanity, and from their very perfection leave us a little cold. In something that I once wrote and showed to Ruskin, I had chanced to cite these lines from "Mimnermus in Church":—

> "You promise heavens free from strife,
> Pure truth and perfect change of will;

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[1] Letter to Dr. Acland, March 9, 1864: see Vol. II. p. 68.

[2] *Præterita*, vol. i. § 255.

But sweet, sweet is this human life,
So sweet I fain would breathe it still.
Your chilly stars I can forgo:
This warm, kind world is all I know."

The lines were new to him, and he asked particulars about the author of *Ionica*. "I like this one verse," he said, adding characteristically, "though I have never thought of stars as chilly." He liked the verse, and it was in harmony with his own feelings. With a mind of singular richness and fulness, he combined a childlike character; fresh, winning, playful, wistful; but he had also something of the impatience and the petulance of a child. These developed under conditions of his education and circumstances into an intellectual pride, which was Ruskin's most tragic fault. It is no discovery of his critics. He knew it and confessed. He did, indeed, rebut the charge of "arrogance," in so far as it referred to the bold utterance of long considered and carefully formed opinions. But he knew that one of his calamities was "a dangerous and lonely pride."[1] And one cannot doubt that he was right in ascribing to this sense of isolation a principal cause of the failing of his mind. His successive mental illnesses were, as we shall find, attended in some respects with every circumstance of exquisite pain. His was no case of an abrupt failure of all mental power and total eclipse. The earlier brain storms passed, and in the intervals between them his mental powers were hardly impaired. But as they increased in frequency, he was for ever haunted with the dread of recurrence. Under the ordeal, Ruskin's character was perhaps perfected by suffering. It is certain that *Præterita*, which some account the most perfect in style of his books, and which was written in intervals of illness, is distinguished also by an unusual serenity of temper; and *Fors Clavigera* similarly closes upon a note of repentant softness:—

"I thought myself speaking to a crowd which could only be influenced by visible utility; nor was I the least aware how many

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 88 (March 1880).

entirely good and holy persons were living in the faith and love of God as vividly and practically now as ever in the early enthusiasm of Christendom, until, chiefly in consequence of the great illnesses which, for some time after 1878, forbade my accustomed literary labour, I was brought into closer personal relations with the friends in America, Scotland, Ireland, and Italy, to whom, if I am spared to write any record of my life, it will be seen that I owe the best hopes and highest thoughts which have supported and guided the force of my matured mind. These have shown me, with lovely initiation, in how many secret places the prayer was made which I had foolishly listened for at the corners of the streets; and on how many hills which I had thought left desolate, the hosts of heaven still moved in chariots of fire. . . . The story of Rosy Vale is not ended;—surely out of its silence the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and round it the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

But Ruskin's own days were not destined to close in the calm of work done in happier temper. The clouds descended on his mind again, and did not break. *Præterita* was left a fragment; and just when he seemed to be coming out of school and expecting to enter upon more serious business he was dismissed by the Master he hoped to serve with a—"That's all I want of you, Sir."[1] If it be the function of biography to reveal what is beautiful and woful in individual souls, a life of Ruskin should not lack material.

These volumes have, however, a further scope. They must attempt to describe not only a life, but an influence. His writings exercised an influence upon the thought of his time, the very extent of which sometimes causes it to be forgotten. He was a pioneer in many fields, and it is the fate of successful pioneers, first to be scorned because their words seem paradoxes, and then to be ignored because their paradoxes have become commonplaces. To give any adequate account of a great writer's work in the world, it is necessary to recall the conditions, the thoughts, the prejudices which existed when he wrote. Again, though Ruskin's life

[1] *St. Mark's Rest*, § 208.

was persistently literary, and though he mixed but little in public affairs, yet his writings, his lectures, his schemes were ever addressed to practical issues. And here, too, his influence made itself felt through many channels and in many different directions. It will be an object of these volumes, then, while avoiding such disquisitions as would be out of place in a biography, to give some historical account of the fortunes of his books and of their influence in the world of thought and of action.

The course of Ruskin's life and influence lends itself with unusual appropriateness to the division of the biography into volumes. The two volumes, covering respectively the periods from birth to 1860 and from 1860 to the end, correspond to two Books in his history. The year 1860 makes a dividing line; before it, he was a writer upon art, after it, a writer also upon economics. Of course men's lives and thoughts are not built in absolutely water-tight compartments; and I have taken care to trace in the earlier period the growth of the ideas and instincts which coloured the later one. There was no dichotomy in Ruskin's mind between them, but only a development from one to the other. He had thought much and written something about social and political conditions before 1860, and after 1860 he continued to be artist, art-teacher, art-critic. Still there is a real line of demarcation which may be drawn in that year. Before 1860, he was in his principal activities the interpreter of a Beautiful World; after 1860, he was principally absorbed in a mission to reform the world. And the nature of his reputation in the world corresponded with this division of his interests. The first volume will show Ruskin winning his way, against some prejudice at first, but with steady advance in favour, to general acceptance. In the second, we shall see him derided; and if in the end by some the more admired and respected, yet also the object of a more doubtful and perplexed regard. The first Book is the record of splendid and unbroken success; the second, of apparent failure. Failure, as some think, splendid also, and destined to become success; but still, so far as immediate

effect was concerned, failure. In another respect the two Books of Ruskin's life are contrasted. The interest of the first Book is largely that of an orderly and, as it may seem, inevitable development. The interest of the second is different. In some autobiographical notes, left among Ruskin's papers and not used in *Præterita*, I find this remark: "My old age is really youth."[1] He made the note in connexion with his keener appreciation of certain aspects of architecture; but it is true in a wider sense. It was in the later period of his life that Ruskin broke most away from the conventions and restraints of thought which old age deems sage and prudent, and turned to the fields of more obstinate defiance and more daring experiment which are sometimes supposed to belong only to youth. Yet, throughout, as I hope to show in the course of these volumes, there was a unity of increasing purpose in Ruskin's life and work. "The multiplicity of subject," he said, "and opposite directions of investigation, which have so often been alleged against me, as if sources of weakness, are in reality, as the multiplied buttresses of the apse of Amiens, as secure in allied result as they are opposed in direction." Ruskin's writings on art are the more worthy of regard because he connected art with life. His writings on social economy are the more broadly based because they take account of the ministry of art. And throughout, beneath all diversity of doctrines, enthusiasms, and works, he pursued the same ideal, and inculcated the same devotion. "There is no Wealth but Life—life, including all its powers of Love, of Joy, and of Admiration."

[1] This aspect of Ruskin's life had suggested itself to one of the French critics who, in recent years, have written with so much charm and insight upon him. See "La Jeunesse de Ruskin" in M. André Chevrillon's *Nouvelles Études Anglaises*, 1910.

[2] Epilogue to *Arrows of the Chace*, written at Amiens in 1880.

[3] *Unto this Last*, § 77. See the quotation of the passage in Vol. II. p. 134.

Volume I

(1819–1860)

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

(1819–1832)

> "So stubborn and chemically inalterable the laws of the prescription were, that now, looking back from 1886 to that brook shore of 1837, whence I could see the whole of my youth, I find myself in nothing whatsoever *changed*. Some of me is dead, more of me stronger. I have learned a few things, forgotten many; in the total of me, I am but the same youth, disappointed and rheumatic."—*Præterita.*

The first forty years of Ruskin's life, which are the subject of the present volume, have the interest of unity of purpose, showing the approval and the accomplishment in middle age of what youth had planned. His methods and opinions did indeed alter, as any wise man's must, with altering conditions, with enlarged experience, with acquired knowledge. A great man of action was once rallied by a friend for changing his views "so hurriedly." "Yes," he replied, "as hurriedly as I could, for I found I was wrong." The man of letters who is the subject of this biography was often taunted for the different views which he put forward at different times upon the same questions. The problems of life, of ethics, of criticism are mostly polygonal, he replied, and "for myself, I am never satisfied that I have handled a subject properly till I have contradicted myself at least three times."[1] To be truly alive, a man must be capable, he said elsewhere, of nourishment and therefore of change; but in the case of a consistent life and a strong character, the change is "that of a tree, not of a cloud."[2]

[1] *Cambridge Inaugural Address*, § 13.

[2] Preface to *Modern Painters*, vol. v.

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Pervicacity of humour, of tastes, of character is one of the most marked features in the life of Ruskin. For nearly fifty years he was a writer of printed books, which became in the end so numerous that he lost count of them; at the age of seven he was already busy with his "Works," and a year later they were numerous enough already for him to begin a classification of them under various heads. He became a great master of English; and though his more juvenile pieces show few gifts of style other than that of fluency, yet by the age of eighteen he was writing sentences nearly as well put together as any he afterwards made. Throughout his active life, he was a moralist in season and, as many of his critics hold, out of season; some have regarded him as a Prophet, all perceive that he was a sermonizer: the performance for which his mother used to call as her baby-boy's great accomplishment was a sermon which began with the words "People, be good." He was to give men eyes to see the beauties of nature: his childish rhymes invited "Papa" to observe "how pretty those icicles are," and "the water-wheel that turns slowly round, Grinding the corn that—requires to be ground" (his "Political Economy of the future," as he afterwards noted), "and quarries with their craggy stones" ("so foretelling *Stones of Venice*").[1] "I was as fond of nature at five years old as I am now," he wrote in 1853,[2] "and had as good an ear for the harmony of words." He became a famous interpreter of art and himself a draughtsman of exquisite, though unfulfilled, skill: already at the age of nine he was poring over engravings from Prout and Turner, and there are drawings of his, done when he was sixteen, which are of real artistic merit. In Ruskin, as in few men of his generation, were united the Hebraistic and the Hellenistic elements; the clash between them, with their reconciliation, is the secret of his work: the earliest of his mental struggles raged around this self-same conflict. The chemical "prescription" in Ruskin's nature must have been unusually stubborn, the accidents of his youth unusually consonant,

[1] *The Queen of the Air*, § 112.

[2] In a letter to his college tutor, the Rev. W. L. Brown.

to give to his life so much of this consistent unity. To trace the influences of the moulding years of his childhood is the object of the present chapter. CHAP. I.

I

The ancestry of John Ruskin, and the origin of his name, have been the subject of much ingenious speculation and some inconclusive research.[1] He himself had little light to throw upon the questions. With the meaning of his name, he was content only to play. He did not care to think that it was merely an abbreviation of "Rough Skin" in the sense of "Pigskin"; but he took "some childish pleasure" in its accidental resemblance to that of Giovanni Rusconi, the Venetian architect who gave an opinion in favour of sparing the old Ducal Palace after the fire of 1574.[2] Ruskin would have been pleased with the etymology, communicated to me by Dr. Furnivall, which traces the name back to an old English word denoting the winter-fur of the squirrel. That "little dark-eyed miracle of the forest, more like a sunbeam than a living creature,"[3] was one of Ruskin's favourite animals. Of the past history of his family he was, he says, "stupidly and heartlessly careless as long as he could have learnt it; not until after his mother's death did he begin to desire to know what he could never more be told." In one place he speaks of his *English* ancestors; and the name has been traced back to the fourteenth century, when a Ruskin was captain of one of Edward III.'s ships. For the most part, however, he thought and talked of himself as of Scottish descent. He was interested in a genealogy which traced his forbears back to the Rusgains (or bark-peeling family) of Muckairn, on the shore of Loch Etive. This is highly conjectural; his paternal great-grandfather—John Ruskin the elder—

[1] Those who are curious in such matters may find the subject fully summarised and discussed in the Library Edition of Ruskin's Works, vol. xxxv. pp. lviii.–lxi., 602–4, 607.

[2] *The Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. ch. viii. § 28.

[3] *Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. xii. § 40.

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whatever may have been his descent, was a Londoner; his grandfather was apprenticed in London, migrating some years later to Edinburgh. This grandfather, John Thomas Ruskin, is described as being of unstable disposition, "seldom knowing his own mind for two hours together"; and during the latter years of his life, his conduct, or misconduct, of his affairs, as well as the condition of his health and mind, gave much anxiety to his family. He had been settled at Bower's Well, Perth, and there he ended his life by his own hand; leaving to his son, John James Ruskin, this painful memory and a load of debt. The character and mental equipment of his son, John James Ruskin (the father of our subject) were, as we shall see, very different from that of John Thomas.

Whatever may have been the remote history of Ruskin's family, its immediate connexion was Scottish. His father was born and bred in Edinburgh; many of his own very earliest memories were connected either with it or with the Grampians and the Tay; the first patriotic delight he could recollect distinctly was that of crossing the border, when his Scottish nurse, Anne Strachan, always sung to him as they approached the Tweed or Esk:—

> "For Scotland, my darling, lies full in my view,
> With her barefooted lassies, and mountains so blue."

He used to speak of himself as "a son of the Manse," too; a son, however, only in the third generation, John Thomas Ruskin, his grandfather, having married Catherine Tweddale, who was a daughter of the Rev. James Tweddale, minister of Glenluce, by his marriage with Catherine Adair. It was through this Catherine Tweddale that he derived, he used to say, such dim gleam of ancestral honour as he could claim, her people being "right earth-born and γηγενεῖς of Galloway." But he was a son of the Manse in another sense. In later years, when he was pronouncing sentence of major commination against a perverse generation at large and pleading, in particular, for a stricter exercise of Church discipline in matters of conduct, he was fond of

recalling the stern Presbyterian conscience with which a great-great-uncle, James Maitland of Sorbie, fearlessly exercised "the needful excommunicative power of all living churches, Puritan or Papal." A certain Lady ——, living in open quarrel with her son, desired to receive the Sacrament. Mr. Maitland resolutely interdicted her. Thinking to shame him into concession, she came forward and knelt at the altar to receive it; whereupon the undaunted pastor lifted her up bodily and conveyed her back to her seat.

Apart from this Galloway ancestry, Ruskin belonged to the commercial class. His grandfather, John Thomas, was a merchant of some sort in Edinburgh; his father, a wine-merchant in London. His mother was the daughter of a sailor in the herring business; his maternal grandmother was the landlady of the Old King's Head in Market Street, Croydon, and "I wish she were alive again," he wrote from Florence, "that I could paint her Simone Memmi's King's Head for a sign"; his mother's sister married a baker at Croydon; his father's sister, a tanner at Perth; "and I don't know much more about my family," he said, "except that there used to be a greengrocer of the name in a small shop near the Crystal Palace." He was but "a poor gipsy Herald," he wrote, when challenging the Squires of England.[1] He was not a "gentleman," not being born in the caste; but he had some pieces of gentlemen's education, and in looking back upon his early days he "would not change," he proudly wrote, "the dreams and tender realities of them for anything I hear now remembered by lords or dames, of their days of childhood in castle halls, and by sweet lawns and lakes in park-walled forest." He also knew castle halls and pleasaunces, as we shall hear; and attributed to his lot one of the most fortunate influences in his education: an instinct, namely, of uncovetous admiration, through which he perceived that it was "probably much happier to live in a small house, and have Warwick Castle to be astonished at, than to live in Warwick Castle and have nothing to be

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 45.

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astonished at; and that, at all events, it would not make Brunswick Square in the least more pleasantly habitable, to pull Warwick Castle down."

II

It was in 54 Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, in Bloomsbury, that Ruskin was born. The house, a small brick edifice of the style common in that quarter of boarding-houses, still stands, and has been marked by the Society of Arts with a memorial tablet. Ruskin's father and mother were first cousins, his maternal grandmother having been a sister of the John Thomas Ruskin aforesaid. They had married in 1818, and in the following year, on February 8, their first and only child was born. Ruskin, who sometimes played with the subject of astrology, noted that he was born at "½ past 7 A.M. (under Aquarius)"; John Varley, who believed in everything (except religion) from astrology to the reality of William Blake's ghost of a flea, once met Ruskin in 1842 or '43, to whom he undertook, on being given the place and hour of nativity, to prove the truth of the science in ten minutes; "and in certainly not more than ten minutes, occupied in drawing of its sky, he fastened upon the three years of my past life when I was 14, 18, and 21 as having been especially fatal to me." They were the years in which he had first seen the object of his early attachment, had fallen in love with her, and had lost her by her marriage to another. He used to trace the leaden influences on him of the planet Saturn, to which in the older systems Aquarius was assigned as the "house." Of less nebulous significance were the gifts which Ruskin received from nature, the character of his parents, and the influence of his home surroundings. Biographers are too much in the habit, he says, of attributing to accidents which introduce some new phase of character all the circumstances of character which gave the accidents importance; and for his own part he regarded many elements in his character and powers, and especially the art-gift, as innate. But innate qualities

may be favoured or checked, and must be directed, by circumstances, and they are thus influenced from the earliest years.

The education of a child begins, said Ruskin, in infancy. "At six months old it can answer smile by smile, and impatience with impatience. It can observe, enjoy, and suffer. Do you suppose it makes no difference to it that the order of the house is perfect and quiet, the faces of its father and mother full of peace, their soft voices familiar to its ear, and even those of strangers, loving; or that it is tossed from arm to arm, among hard, or reckless, or vain-minded persons, in the gloom of a vicious household, or the confusion of a gay one? The moral disposition is, I doubt not, greatly determined in those first speechless years."[1] He wrote thus of the early years of Scott, but he was thinking also of his own. The character of his parents and the tenor of the daily round at home were the formative forces in Ruskin's life. As a child and boy, he was taught by his mother; at school he was a "day boy," and then only intermittently; when he travelled, it was with his parents; and even when he went into residence at Oxford, his mother accompanied him.

"I have seen my mother travel," says Ruskin, "from sunrise to sunset on a summer's day without once leaning back in the carriage."[2] A friend who made her acquaintance in later years, when she had hurt her leg and could only walk with difficulty, noted it as characteristic of her nature that she chose for support, rather than the arm of husband or son, the back of a chair.[3] She maintained this unbending attitude in the education of her son. An evangelical Puritan of the straitest sect, she held strong views on the sinfulness even of toys. A bunch of keys and a box of bricks were the total equipment in this respect of Ruskin's nursery. An aunt once brought him a Punch and a Judy, radiant in scarlet and gold, from the Soho Bazaar. His mother immediately put them away, and he never saw them again. There was a like restriction in dainties.

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 33.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] G. B.-J. in *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. p. 252.

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Many a child, even of a generation or two ago, can remember the bliss of accompanying its mother to the store-cupboard and being allowed to dip its tiny hand into the jar of sugar or sultanas; and in the present generation every self-respecting child brings up its parents to the plentiful supply of sweets. Ruskin's recollection in this sort was of three raisins once counted out to him. Nor was the paucity of toys counteracted by any abundance of playfellows. His father and mother kept themselves to themselves, as the saying is, and expected the child to do the like. There were indeed some delicious days when, as soon as he could run, he was taken down to see his Croydon aunt, and left to play by "the springs of Wandel." And there were weeks of yet greater delight, both in his earliest years and in later childhood, spent in his Scottish aunt's garden sloping to the Tay. The idea of distant hills was connected in the child's mind with approach to the extreme felicities of life; so that when at the age of three and a half he was taken to have his portrait painted by Northcote, and the old man asked him what he would like to have put in the distance, he replied, "Blue hills." At Croydon, and at Perth, alike, there were many cousins; of his Perth cousin, Jessie, he was specially fond, but she died early; her elder sister, Mary, was afterwards adopted by Ruskin's parents. The Scottish aunt, like her of Croydon,[1] was of Puritan temper; and the servant-of-all-work in the Perth house "might well have been the prototype of the Mause of *Old Mortality*." "I never can be thankful enough," he added, "for having seen, in her, the Scottish Puritan spirit in its perfect faith and force." The Springs of Wandel and the Banks of Tay were, however, but occasional delights; for the most part his first years were spent without companions, and with no more alluring prospect than could be obtained by watching

[1] Ruskin's family connexions are complicated, and sometimes confused, by the fact that both his father's sister (the Aunt Jessie or Janet of *Fors* and *Præterita*) and his mother's sister (Aunt Bridget) married a Mr. Richardson—in the former case, Mr. Peter Richardson, tanner, of Perth; in the latter, Mr. Richardson of Market Street, Croydon.

the turncock at an opposite water-stand or by a sidelong glance at the trees of Brunswick Square. When the child was about four, his father was able to leave Hunter Street and to buy the lease of a house on Herne Hill (No. 28), then embowered in leafy seclusion and commanding from its garret windows a notable view, on one side, of the Norwood hills, and, on the other, of the valley of the Thames. The house, which still stands, was for more than eighty years, though with some intermission, connected with Ruskin or his memory. He lived there with his parents for twenty years. It was then let to strangers for a while; but in 1872 Ruskin made over the lease to his cousin, Mrs. Arthur Severn, and her husband. During their tenancy, which continued till 1907, Ruskin's old nursery was for the remainder of his life kept as a bedroom for him; and it was in that room that he wrote in 1885 the preface to the autobiographical memories of his childhood. The house had front and back garden, and in it the boy passed most of his days for some years:—

"The differences of primal importance which I observed between the nature of this garden, and that of Eden, as I had imagined it, were, that, in this one, *all* the fruit was forbidden. . . . The unalloyed and long continuing pleasure given me by our fruit-tree avenue was in its blossom, not in its bearing. . . . So that very early indeed in my thoughts of trees, I had got at the principle given fifty years afterwards in *Proserpina*, that the seeds and fruits of them were for the sake of the flowers, not the flowers for the fruit; . . . and for many and many a year to come,—until indeed, the whole of life became autumn to me,—my chief prayer for the kindness of heaven, in its flowerful seasons, was that the frost might not touch the almond blossom."

In the matter of discipline, Ruskin's mother was a Spencerian before Spencer. "Let your penalties," says that mildly austere philosopher, "be like the penalties inflicted by inanimate Nature—inevitable. The hot cinder burns a child the first time he seizes it; it burns him the second time; it burns him every time; and he very soon learns not

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to touch the hot cinder." That was Mrs. Ruskin's method and the boy needed no second lesson. In a lecture given at Woolwich, he recalled an incident of his early childhood which his mother was fond of telling him. "One evening, when I was yet in my nurse's arms, I wanted to touch the tea-urn, which was boiling merrily. It was an early taste for bronzes, I suppose; but I was resolute about it. My mother bade me keep my fingers back; I insisted on putting them forward. My nurse would have taken me away from the urn, but my mother said—'Let him touch it, Nurse.' So I touched it,—and that was my first lesson in the meaning of the word Liberty. It was the first piece of Liberty I got, and the last which for some time I asked for."[1] There are questions, he says, which are determined more easily in days of innocence, than when approached with the prejudices and puzzlements of later years. Is the Will Free, and what is Human Responsibility? *Solvitur ambulando.* He well remembered settling these matters for himself, before he was ten years old, on the nursery stairs: "I jumped up and down an awkward turn of four steps, and considered whether it was likely that God knew whether I should jump only three, or the whole four at a time. Having settled it in my mind that He knew quite well, though I didn't, which I should do; and also whether I should fall or not in the course of the performance,—though I was altogether responsible for taking care not to,—I never troubled my head more on the matter from that day to this." This rough-and-tumble method of approaching some abstract questions was characteristic of Ruskin throughout life. Meanwhile, his sense of responsibility had been strengthened by external sanction; for the child was "always summarily whipped if he cried, did not do as he was bid, or tumbled on the stairs."

Sundays in the Evangelical household at Hunter Street and Herne Hill were a sore trial to Ruskin. A lurid shade was cast, he says, over the whole of Friday and Saturday by the horrible sense that Sunday was coming. Croydon afforded no escape, for his aunt, even more Evangelical than his mother, carried her religion down to the glacial

[1] *The Story of Arachne*, § 3.

circle of Holiness, by allowing only cold mutton for Sunday's dinner, "which as I much preferred it hot greatly diminished the influence of the *Pilgrim's Progress*." At home, the thought of Yorkshire pudding to come at one o'clock afforded some consolation; and Good Friday was also partly intermeddled with light and shade because there were hot cross buns at breakfast, though church afterwards. But the trial of having all his story-books taken away from him on Sunday morning was severe, and the bottom of a pew in church was a terribly dull place to keep quiet in. Many persons who were brought up in similar surroundings will share Ruskin's recollections of Sunday as the eclipse of the week; but few perhaps have submitted so late in life as he to the constraining force of early associations. When he was living much abroad, he never thought of travelling or climbing on Sunday. Writing to his father from Venice in 1852, he apologised even for referring to the progress of his work in a Sunday letter. It was not till 1858 that he made even a sketch on a Sunday.

So far the picture of Ruskin's childhood may seem a gloomy one, and suggest that rigorous teachers shackled his youth. The reality was far otherwise. There are many lights to be added to the shades; his childhood was, in fact, intensely happy; its surroundings were favourable to the moral disposition which he was to commend in his life's work, and its discipline, so far from restraining his natural instincts and gifts, gave them in many respects their most fortunate direction. The orderly routine, the gentle affection, the quiet of his home, taught him the perfect meaning of Peace in thought, act, and word. Harmony and peace met the sense like a breeze, and insensibly drew the soul even in childhood into harmony with them. He had never heard his father's or mother's voice raised in any question with each other; never seen a moment's disorder in any household matter; never caught even one of those vague hints which sometimes disturb childhood with uneasy mystery, of vexatious trouble or baulked ambition.

Then, again, the monastic discipline of his mother

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developed in him an extreme perfection in palate and all other bodily senses, and this was the foundation of his taste; the foundation, perhaps also, of his thought. "I believe," he says, "that quiet, and the withdrawal of objects likely to distract by amusing the child, so as to let it fix its attention undisturbed on every least thing in its domain, is essential to the formation of some of the best powers of thought." If this be so, Ruskin's childhood was peculiarly favourable to the gifts which he was afterwards to develop. With few toys and no playfellows, the child's faculties were concentrated from his earliest years on the observation of nature and inanimate things. He learnt, he says, to pass his days contentedly in tracing the squares and comparing the colours of the nursery carpet, and examining what patterns he could find in bed-covers, dresses, or wall-papers. When the household moved from Bloomsbury to Herne Hill, the garden took the place of the carpet. What he said in one of his Oxford lectures of the world of childhood was very true of his own: the child "sets all the faculties of heart and imagination on little things, so as to be able to make anything out of them he chooses. Confined to a little garden, he does not imagine himself somewhere else, but makes a great garden out of that."[1] Ruskin attached something of the same value, in concentrating the attention, to the few and simple illustrations in the books which formed his nursery library. It is "not well," he says, "to make the imagination indolent, or take its work out of its hands by supplying continual pictures of what might be sufficiently conceived without pictures." He remembered poring during unaccountable hours over an old edition of *Robinson Crusoe* with a few rude and meagre vignettes entirely devoid of all attempt at imitative resemblance. "I am quite sure," he says, "that being forced to make all I could out of very little things, and to remain long contented with them, not only in great part formed the power of close analysis in my mind, and the habit of steady contemplation; but rendered the power of greater art over me, when I first saw it, as intense as that of magic,

[1] *Aratra Pentelici*, § 77.

so that it appealed to me like a vision out of another world." [1] CHAP. I.

The discipline of his mother in religious matters was yet more important. Her creed was narrow, and the unquestioning obedience with which he accepted it was to have a painful reaction. With him it was afterwards to be "Protestantism or nothing" [2]—Protestantism in a very rigid form, and the contest went for a time in favour of negation. But from his mother's teaching he had, he says, perfect understanding of the nature of Obedience and of Faith. And a knowledge, moreover, such as few men have had, of the Bible. His mother's daily readings with him "established his soul in life" and were "the one essential part in all his education." She began with the first chapter of Genesis, went straight through to the last verse of the Apocalypse, and began again at Genesis the next day. I have been told that on the night before he was three years of age he repeated to his mother the whole of the 119th Psalm. The child had also to learn the whole of "the fine old Scottish paraphrases." To this daily discipline he attributed the cultivation of his ear and his sense of style. They read alternate verses, she "watching every intonation, allowing not so much as a syllable to be missed or misplaced." All this was a study not only in religion, and in Bible literature; but a discipline in attention and in all literature. "The duty enforced upon me in early youth of reading every word of the gospels and prophecies as if written by the hand of God, gave me the habit of awed attention which made many passages of the profane writers, frivolous to an irreligious reader, deeply grave to me." [3]

Such were Ruskin's debts to his mother. Her upbringing of him was in many ways fortunate, but there were calamities also in it, as he came clearly enough to perceive. He had, he said, nothing to love and nothing to endure; he was taught no precision of manners, no bodily dexterity. He did no wrong, and knew not the meaning of it, but his was a fugitive and cloistered virtue. The bridle and blinkers were

[1] *The Cestus of Aglaia*, § 90. [2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 76.
[3] *Bible of Amiens*, ch. iii. § 52.

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never so taken off as to allow him any independence of action. His education was, he added, "at once too formal and too luxurious"; and in later years, "whenever I did anything wrong, stupid, or hard-hearted, my mother always said, 'It is because you were too much indulged.'" Again, he had no companions in his childhood; and "by the time I was seven years old was already," he says, "getting too independent, mentally, even of my father and mother; I having nobody else to be dependent upon, began to lead a very small, perky, contented, conceited, Cock-Robinson-Crusoe sort of life, in the central point which it appeared to me (as it must naturally appear to geometrical animals), that I occupied in the universe."

To his father Ruskin owed the cultivation of artistic gifts. John James Ruskin, whom we shall come to know and (I hope) to like well in the course of this biography, was a man of rare character; combining with great shrewdness in business a genuine love of literature and art, and a strong vein of romantic sentiment. He had learned Latin thoroughly, says his son, "under the noble traditions of Adam at the High School of Edinburgh, while by the then living and universal influence of Sir Walter every scene of his native city was exalted in his imagination by the purest poetry and the proudest history that ever hallowed or haunted the streets and rocks of a brightly inhabited capital." The fact that Dr. Thomas Brown, the Professor of Moral Philosophy, acted as his mentor in literary matters shows the position which the elder Ruskin held in the cultivated society of Edinburgh. He had devoted himself early to business, first to assist in the maintenance of his parents and afterwards to pay off his father's debts. His engagement to his cousin, Margaret Cox, then living with his mother, was protracted for nine years, in order that he might discharge this obligation of family honour before setting up house for himself. He had first been a clerk in the house of Mr. Moore, an army contractor, with whose daughter he fell in love. She was a Roman Catholic, and her parents forbade the idea of marriage. He then came to London, in 1810, as clerk in a wine merchant's office, and two years later

entered into partnership under the title of Ruskin, Telford, and Domecq—Mr. Domecq contributing the sherry from his famous Macharnudo vineyards, Mr. Telford the capital, and Ruskin the brains. The firm, established in Billiter Street, was for many years the leading house in the sherry trade. In 1818 John James Ruskin had been able to marry, and in 1824, as already related, his household had been removed to Herne Hill. He was engaged in the city every day, and left the education of the son to the mother; but in the early mornings, and in the evenings, the boy owed a good deal to his father's tastes. "We both of us," said Ruskin, "had alike a subdued consciousness of being profane and rebellious characters compared to my mother"; and "though my father went to church with a resigned countenance, I knew very well that he liked going just as little as I did." To his mother, then, Ruskin owed religious teaching and the Bible; to his father, romance and Scott, Shakespeare, *Don Quixote*, Byron. The father had been a pupil in the landscape class of Alexander Nasmyth at Edinburgh, and a drawing of Conway Castle hung over his dressing-room table. The boy was always allowed to watch his father shave; and it was a firm understanding that when the operation was finished a story should be told about the pictured castle. In the evenings the father would read aloud to his wife, while the boy sat quiet; and Ruskin could no more recollect the time when he did not know the Waverley Novels than when he did not know the Bible. His father's taste was as exact, too, in art as in sherries; and "he never allowed me for an instant to look at a bad picture." At good pictures he had, as we shall hear, many opportunities of looking, even from his earliest childhood; but something must be told first about the boy's more formal education.

III

This was undertaken by his mother, who, up to his tenth year, was his sole tutor. He had taught himself to read; by sentences, not syllables; by the look of words in their collective aspect, a study which he pursued by copying printed type; and so successful in his case was the method

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that, at five years old, he says, "I was already sending for my 'second volumes' to the circulating libraries." His mother, who had "devoted him to God" from his birth, gave the Bible lessons, already described; taught him the Latin grammar, and even mastered some rudiments of Hebrew, in order to initiate him into the Word of God in that tongue. His father agreed that the boy should be withdrawn from the sherry trade, and bred for the Church; and in later years, when his son had gone his own way, he used to say with tears in his eyes, "Yes, he would have been a Bishop." For the better pursuit of the polite studies which were to lead to the bench, a classical tutor was in due course called in, and the choice was destined to have some influence upon Ruskin's life.

He worshipped with his father and mother in Beresford Chapel, Walworth, "the Londonian chapel in its perfect type," as described in *Præterita*, with "pulpit, sublimely isolated, a stout, four-legged box of well-grained wainscot, high as the level of front galleries, and decorated with a cushion of crimson velvet, padded six inches thick, with gold tassels at the corners; which was a great resource to me when I was tired of the sermon, because I liked watching the rich colour of the folds and creases that came in it when the clergyman thumped it." Twenty years later Burne-Jones was taken by an evangelical aunt to the same place of worship, and on reading the account of it "in that most heavenly book called *Præterita*" he recalled "the fat cushions into which the preacher pressed his face when he prayed . . . a big fat cushion for the preacher, and a less fat one for the curate, and a hard, dry, mean one for the clerk." "How ineffably wonderful," wrote Ruskin in reply to his friend, "that you and I both sate—and—behaved properly in Beresford Chapel."[1] The minister of this chapel was the Rev. Edward Andrews, an eloquent preacher and "a sort of Pope," we are told,[2] in the Congregational Church of the time.

[1] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. pp. 41–42, where a delicious drawing of the three-decker with its nicely graded orders of cushion may be seen.

[2] *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, vol. i. p. 126.

Ruskin's father and mother had not presumed to seek the great man's acquaintance; but the child, and his cousin Mary, "used to walk up and down in Walworth, merely in the hope of seeing him pass on the other side of the way," and one day he stopped and spoke to them. An acquaintance followed, and Ruskin's father engaged "the Doctor" to initiate his son into the classical authors. Dr. Andrews was the father of Coventry Patmore's first wife, the Angel in the House, and it was through this connexion that Ruskin in after years became introduced to the Pre-Raphaelite set. A letter from the boy to Mrs. Monro, a neighbour in Camberwell Grove, who with her daughter, Mrs. Richard Gray, was allowed to pet him, describes the pleasures of his first classical learning:— CHAP. I.

"Well, papa, seeing how fond I was of the doctor, and knowing him to be an excellent Latin scholar, got him for me as a tutor, and every lesson I get I like him better and better, for he makes me laugh 'almost, if not quite'—to use one of his own expressions—the whole time. He is so funny, comparing Neptune's lifting up the wrecked ships of Æneas with his trident to my lifting up a potato with a fork, or taking a piece of bread out of a bowl of milk with a spoon! And as he is always saying [things] of that kind, or relating some droll anecdote, or explaining the part of Virgil (the book which I am in) very nicely, I am always delighted when Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are come."

This was in 1829; a year later, Dr. Andrews resigned his charge, in a letter which may be quoted to show the impression made by Ruskin upon his first tutor:—

"Walworth, *May* 22, 1830.—My dear Sir,—I am anxious only that you should believe it was utterly impossible for me to continue my attendances on your son: the regularity of my visits, at first, demonstrated how honourably I would fulfil my engagements, while dire necessity kept at a little distance from me. But latterly, owing to a great increase of the church with other ministerial calls, I could not be regular, neither indeed had occasional and indefinite lessons been sufficient, which they would *not* have been, could I have continued them. I am gratified to

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see that you repose confidence in my opinion: the tutor was what I recommended: with reluctance but conscientiously. I say with reluctance because it was painful to me to be separated from Master Ruskin: a boy whose mind requires a peculiar management, and who excited in me a higher degree of interest than I ever felt for any other young gentleman with whose education I was honoured."

Dr. Andrews went on to urge the importance of studying closely the "Alphabetismus Anomalorum" in Greek grammar and the "Elegantiæ" in Latin exercises. It is to be feared that Ruskin did not then, or thereafter, devote himself greatly to the grammatical anomalies; but he owed to his first tutor a love of Virgil as one of "the great masters of the absolute use of language,"[1] and an understanding, from the Odes of Anacreon, "that the Greeks loved doves, swallows, and roses just as well as I did." The tutor recommended by Dr. Andrews was Mr. Rowbotham, an industrious and fairly well informed compiler of school-books, who kept a "young gentleman's Academy," near the Elephant and Castle, in the Walworth Road. Under the tutorship of this worthy person, twice a week in the evening, Ruskin added to his learning the elements of French and of mathematics.

IV

Such were the lessons of the boy's school-hours; a more important part of his education was given by his holidays, and especially by the summer tours with his parents. In 1825, when he was six, they went to Paris, Brussels, Ghent, and Bruges. With this exception the tours, until the year 1833, were in Great Britain. His father was in the habit of travelling once a year for orders, and on these journeys he combined pleasure with business. He travelled to sell his wines, but also to see pictures; and in any country seat where there was a Reynolds, or a Velazquez, or a Vandyck, or a Rembrandt, "he would pay the surliest housekeeper into patience until we had examined it to our heart's content."

[1] *Lectures on Art*, § 70.

Also, he travelled leisurely—in a private carriage hired or borrowed for the expedition, and he made a point of including in each summer's journey a visit to some region of romantic scenery, such as Scotland (in 1824, 1826, 1827), Wales (1831), the West of England (1828), Derbyshire (1829), and the English Lakes (1824, 1826, 1830). These early tours had included also most of the cathedrals and castles of England. From the earliest days the young Ruskin had accompanied his parents on their journeys, perched on the top of a box. His art-gift, Ruskin said, "belonged to him by birth-right, and came by Athena's will, from the air of English country villages and Scottish hills."[1] But it was developed rightly because, much as he loved art, he loved what she mirrors better:—

"The beginning of all my own right art work in life depended not on my love of art, but of mountains and sea. All boys with any good in them are fond of boats, and of course I liked the mountains best when they had lakes at the bottom; and I used to walk always in the middle of the loosest gravel I could find in the roads of the midland counties, that I might hear, as I trod on it, something like the sound of the pebbles on sea-beach. . . . I would pass entire days in rambling on the Cumberland hill-sides, or staring at the lines of surf on a low sand; and when I was taken annually to the Water-colour Exhibition, I used to get hold of a catalogue beforehand, mark all the Robsons, which I knew would be of purple mountains, and all the Copley Fieldings, which I knew would be of lakes or sea; and then go deliberately round the room to these, for the sake, observe, not of the pictures, in any wise, but only of the things painted."[2]

To this intensity of pleasure in nature, to his enthusiastic love of scenery, of which succeeding chapters will give ample illustration, Ruskin attributed "the impulse to which he owed the best force of his life and whatever of saying or doing in it has been useful to others."[3] And with this love of nature went "an hereditary love of antiquity as natural to

[1] *The Queen of the Air*, § 112. [2] *The Eagle's Nest*, § 41.
[3] *The Art of England*, § 159.

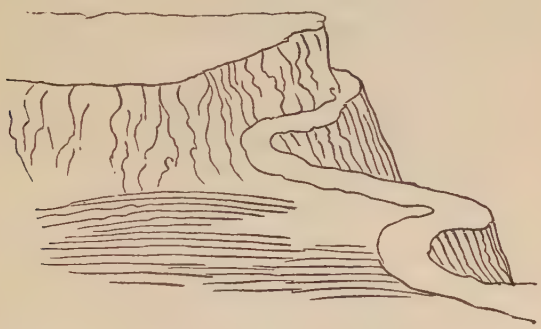
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me as a little jackdaw's taste for steeples."[1] "In the more romantic expeditions," Ruskin said in one of his latest lectures, "aided and inspired by Scott, and never weary of re-reading the stories of *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, and *The Antiquary*, I took an interest more deep than that of an ordinary child; and received impressions which guided and solemnized the whole subsequent tenor of my life."[2] In this way he had seen before he was twelve all the high-roads, and most of the cross-roads of England and Wales, and the greater part of lowland Scotland; every castle in Scotland, England, and Wales, from Stirling to Dover, and every abbey from Dunkeld to St. Fride-swide. "Seen" them, he says; meaning a very different thing from what is called seeing or doing a place in days of hustle, bustle, railways, bicycles, and motor-cars. On the long and leisurely summer journeys, his father or mother or nurse Anne used to take the boy in the quiet afternoons to play or look, as long as he chose, wherever he chose—which was always by a river-side, or under a castle wall, or in an abbey cloister. As, a little later, he was to shiver pensively with Augustines at St. Bernard, so in early years he had mourned through many a day-dream at Melrose and Bolton.

He was encouraged by his father to write records of these travels, and already he had amused himself by authorship. What he described as his "earliest dated efforts indicating incipient action of brain molecules" belong to the year 1826, and are contained in a little note-book still preserved at Brantwood. It includes the following "work": "*Harry and Lucy" Concluded, printed and composed by a little boy and also drawn.* The title-page and a page or two of the text are given in *Præterita*; I reproduce here the "copper-plate," purporting to represent "Harry's new road," as the author's first attempt at mountain-drawing. "Your new chapter," wrote Miss Jean Ingelow when she read this part of *Præterita*, "appears to introduce one at a bound to genius of a rare kind which I have often longed to see described. It belongs to the senses as well as to the reason. What child of seven ever *saw* how a road went winding up and round a cliff before? The upper curve where the road goes behind the

[1] *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, § 22. [2] *Mending the Sieve*, § 1.

cliff, you could hardly make more correctly now. Surely this is a gift of the eye." The other pieces in this, the first of Ruskin's "Works," are in verse; his *juvenilia* in this medium have interest for their precocity and evidence of early tastes. It is curious that one of the pieces is in praise of "The Steam-Engine." This may be read by the curious in the Library Edition; it is characteristic of the author, if in nothing else, in going off at frequent tangents. Another of the first pieces, on "The Rainbow," is characteristic, as Ruskin slyly observed in *Præterita*, in its "didactic character



with observations on the ignorant and unreflective character of certain people":—

> "But those that do not know about that light,
> Reflect not on it; and in all that light,
> Not one of all the colours do they know."

Another of the poems, addressed to "Ragland (*sic*) Castle," shows already a certain interest in "Gothic arches, falling towers." In 1827 Ruskin spent several months in Scotland with his aunt, and one of the things which he remembered most vividly in after years was going through Glenfarg, near Kinross, when the rocks were hung with icicles. The occasion is commemorated in the lines ("Papa, how pretty those icicles are") already referred to; but a piece of the previous year is worth citing in full; it shows a power of consecutive thought which is of remarkable precocity in a child not yet eight, and is a prelude to that

CHAP. I. moralisation of landscape which was to be a principal characteristic of Ruskin's mature work:—

"Glen of Glenfarg, thy beauteous rill,
Streaming through thy mountains high,
Onward pressing, onward still,
Hardly seeing the blue sky.

Mountain streams, press on your way
And run into the stream below:
Never stop like idle clay,—
Hear the sheep, and cattle low.

Stones that in the streams do lie,
Bear the rushing torrent still:
—Thou shalt never, never die,
—Submit unto the Almighty's will.

Cows that lie upon the grass,
Rise and graze upon the hills;
Never be a heavy mass,
Like a stone that's in the rills.

Sheep that eat upon the hills,
Rise, and play, and jump about;
Drink out of the running rills,
And always on the grass be out.

Cottages upon the plain,
Placed so near the floury mills;
Cottager, look on Charles's Wain,
Right above the grassy hills.

The pole-star guides thee on the way,
When in dark nights thou art lost;
Therefore look up at the starry day,
Look at the stars about thee tost."

Not less remarkable, in another way, is a set of blank verses on "Time," in which, with a droll mixture of metaphysics and toyshop recollections, he wonders whether Father Time be a figure, a quality, or a sense. A boy who could amuse himself with such speculations at the age of seven was likely to develop remarkable powers of analysis. His longest poetical exercise in 1827 was a versification, some 400 lines long, of Scott's *Monastery*. In 1828 (*æt.* 9) Ruskin composed some lines "On Skiddaw and Derwent Water" which, two years later, were published in a magazine.[1] As this is the author's earliest printed piece, I give some extracts:—

"Skiddaw! upon thy cliffs the sun shines bright;
Yet only for a moment: then gives place
Unto a playful cloud, which on thy brow
Sports wantonly, soon melting into air;
But shadowing first thy side of broken green,
And making more intense the sun's return.
Then, in the morning, on thy head those clouds
Rest, as upon a couch, and give fair scope
To fancy's play; and airy fortresses,
Towers, banners, spears and battlements appear
Chasing the others off; and in their turn
Are vanquished too, dissolving like the mould
That's trampled by the foot of urchin boy;
And, rolling down, though once so firmly bound
By roots tenacious, while the upward spoiler
Climbs on to invade the hidden eagle's nest.
Skiddaw! majestic, Giant Nature's work,
Lower than Alps or Andes. . . .
The touch of man
Raised pigmy mountains, but gigantic tombs.
The touch of Nature raised the mountain's brow,
But made no tombs at all, save where the snow—
The fleecy locks of winter fall around,
A mausoleum for the careless swain."

[1] *The Spiritual Times: a Monthly Magazine*, February 1830. The version here given combines the original MS. with that printed in the magazine.

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There is thought in the closing lines, and the opening ones show a minute watching of the clouds which was characteristic of Ruskin throughout life. "We might pick out of the *Excursion*," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "many a duller passage than this"; and so we might from the *Night Thoughts* many a less felicitous passage than Ruskin's lines "On Happiness," which belong to this same year 1828. But in actual precocity of achievement there is, I think, no piece among his *juvenilia* more remarkable than "The Site of Babylon." The first stanza, here quoted, might almost pass for one out of Rossetti's *Burden of Nineveh*—a poem, by the way, which Ruskin in after years greatly admired :—

"The desert stretched its ocean sweep,
All vast and boundless as the deep
In mighty solitude;
Night, like a lion o'er his prey,
Above the vast, the desert way,
In silence stern did brood.
I stood beside one tree that flung
A gloomy shadow, where it hung;
And not a column,—not a stone—
Marked out the site of Babylon."

Ruskin was eleven when he wrote these lines. In 1830 the summer tour with his parents was to the Lake District, and this was recorded in a long rhyming poem of more than 2000 lines called the *Iteriad*. Its poetical merit is small, but it shows the author's fluency, facility, and accuracy of observation; and is further interesting as containing a lively description of scenes and modes of travel which have now passed away, and as recording early impressions of places with which Ruskin was in one way or another to become associated. "The more one reads the boy's poem," says one than whom few have known the Lake Country better, "the more one is struck with the way in which that little lad of eleven saw and noted what was really best worth seeing in the district."[1] The view of Windermere from Low-wood, as which there is not, says Professor Wilson, such another

[1] *Ruskin and the English Lakes*, by the Rev. H. D. Rawnsley.

prospect in England; the streamlets on the flanks of Helvellyn like "threads of pure silver which hung from the sky"; the stream that crosses the road near Low-wood, by which Wordsworth and his sister rejoiced; the heathy swells which Matthew Arnold afterwards immortalised: these and many another characteristic piece of lakeland are noted, if without any poetic felicity, yet with accuracy of observation. He went to Crosthwaite Church in the hope of seeing Southey, and was not disappointed:—

"His eyes were as black as a coal, but in turning
They flashed,—ay, as much as that coal does in burning!
His nose in the midst took a small outward bend,
Rather hooked like an eagle's, and sharp at the end;
But his dark lightning-eye made him seem half-inspired,
Or like his own Thalaba, vengefully fired."[1]

The description is observant and agrees with the portraits. Friar's Crag he had seen before, and it had made a profound impression upon him. "The first thing which I remember, as an event in life, was being taken by my nurse to the brow of Friar's Crag on Derwent Water; the intense joy, mingled with awe, that I had in looking through the hollows in the mossy roots, over the crag, into the dark lake, has associated itself more or less with all twining roots of trees ever since."[2] The *Iteriad* notes the net-like weaving of "the roots of the fir, of the elm, and the oak." Ruskin in after life once described the spot as "one of the three most beautiful scenes in Europe," and it is here that his admirers in the Lake Country have placed a memorial of him. The Ascent of Skiddaw is told with all the air of excitement and adventure which belongs to such enterprises in the Alps. A guide-book of the time mentions among the paraphernalia for an attempt on this hardly virgin peak "the brandy which with a few biscuits

[1] On the following Sunday they saw Wordsworth at Rydal Chapel. "Rather disappointed in this gentleman's appearance," says the prose diary kept by Ruskin and his cousin Mary; "he appeared asleep the greatest part of the time. This gentleman possesses a long face and a large nose."

[2] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xvii. § 13.

CHAP. I.

or sandwiches a provident guide will not fail to recommend," and Ruskin duly chronicles—

> "Cakes, sandwiches, ham, were by no means unhandy,
> And amongst other things we forgot not some brandy."

In coming down from Kirkstone, our poet digresses into a discussion, which he was presently to resume in prose, upon the influence of Lake architecture upon scenery, and avers that he would like a house "snugly embayed by the side of the Lake"—a wish that was to be realised forty years afterwards on the shore of Coniston Water.

Many of Ruskin's early "Works" were, like his later, illustrated by the author. This is the case with a manuscript volume, now at Brantwood, which is entitled

> *The Puppet Show; or, Amusing Characters for Children.*
> With coloured plates by John Ruskin. 1829.

The writing is in "print" hand throughout. There is an introduction, and twenty-nine characters are then brought forward in succession. It is not without curious interest that the first of them is "George of England," whose "power will serve to save." It was under the banner of St. George that Ruskin was to set himself, forty years later, to his scheme of political salvation. Among so much that is serious and (in intention, if not in execution) old in Ruskin's *juvenilia*, it is refreshing to find occasional evidence that the boy was a boy after all. In the invocation to the Sun, the bathos—"At the hot noon Oft have I worked *to make my garden nice*"—reminds us that he played in the garden; and there is a rhyming letter of 1831 which records a visit to the pantomime, and gloats over a supper of "puff-tarts, ham, and oyster patties."

There is biographical interest of another kind in these juvenile verses, and in the letters of the same period. The world in which he lived and moved and had his being was from his earliest years the world of art and literature. On his tenth birthday he received some presents which he specially valued:—

"There never were gifts (he writes to his father, Feb. 21, 1829) more useful to me than—shall I enumerate them?—my pens, my

instruments, my box, my pencils, my portfolios, my paints, my atlas and my paper." CHAP. I.

His literary and artistic efforts were discursive, but his industry was prodigious. He was never happier—then or in after life—than when he had a dozen books on hand at once:—

"I do believe (he writes to his father on May 10, 1829) that the last year of my life was the happiest; and shall I tell you why? Because I have had more to do than I could do without cramming and ramming, and wishing days were longer and sheets of paper broader. . . . I do think, indeed am sure, that in common things it is having too much to do which constitutes happiness, and too little, unhappiness."

"I find time now (he writes three years later, Feb. 20, 1832) still more scarce than ever; for what with Livy and Lucian, Homer, French, drawings, arithmetic, globe work and mineralogical dictionary, I positively am all flurry and hurry."

So, then, we must picture the young Ruskin as an author in his childhood; busy with his works, as he has described, in a little recess in the parlour at Herne Hill, with a table in front of it, wholly sacred to him; seated, in the admiring company of his parents, as an idol in a niche. Among those privileged to see the idol at home was James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, and a letter to him from the elder Ruskin shows the father's fond pride:—

"Herne Hill, *Jan.* 22, 1834.—My dear Sir,—It is long since I was favoured by our friend Mr. Elder with a sight of part of a letter of January, 1833, in which you very kindly enquire after my son and myself, and if I had not deemed it intrusive, I should sooner have thanked you. I cannot say what has now led me to do what I have so long deferred, unless it may be sundry hints from our wife, and niece, and son, who all indulge in periodical remembrances of the delight your only too short visit offered them. Touching my son, there are many to whom I would never name him or his pursuits; but to men of talent and of heart I find I can say many things that I dare not tell the world at large. It cannot comprehend; it has not patience,

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nor feeling, nor delicacy. It shall not be entrusted with my weaknesses, because I am not yet willing to be laughed out of them. To you I will venture to say that the youth you were kind enough to notice, gives promise of very considerable talent. His faculty of composition is unbounded; without, however, any very strong indication of originality. He writes verse and prose perpetually, check him as we will. . . . That I may not select, I send his last eighty or a hundred lines, produced in one hour, while he waited for me in the city. Do not suppose we are fostering a poetical plant or genius, to say *we keep a poet*. It is impossible for any parents to make less of a gift than we do of this. . . ."

Qui s'excuse, s'accuse; but the accusation is venial. The fostering of the child's precious talent was an amiable weakness; but Ruskin's father certainly indulged it, and it made a pleasant link in the relations between father and son. Ruskin in after life often alluded to his foible for discursive industry. The same ironical note is struck in his early letters. He warns his father in absence (March 6, 1830) that he will know to his cost on his return how busy his son has been. "I am already," he writes, "in the fourth hundred of the second book, cantering away to Borrowdale and Bowderstone and Buttermere." So again, a year later (Feb. 28, 1831), he writes: "You will be smothered under a mountain of words. . . . You will groan under the weight of lines, the sea of rhymes, which I shall load you with on your return." To Ruskin's father the load was all a pleasure. The boy always composed a Rhyming Letter to his father for New Year's Day (generally enclosing some other pieces from the author's stock in hand), and another for his Birthday. Often, too, when the father was absent on business, the son sent similar letters in rhyme. Sometimes there is a note of strain in the boy's effusions; but more often the rhyming letters pour themselves out with the unrestraint of comradeship. The trivialities of home and the pranks of the schoolroom are told with much spirit, and often with humorous insight into character. Nor is the boy ever afraid of speaking his deeper thoughts and

fancies into his father's ear. At other times he hits off the foibles of both his parents, or chaffs the wine-merchant freely about his business. There is a characteristic touch in this connexion in one of the letters to W. H. Harrison from Ruskin's father (Jan. 30, 1837): "His treatment of the City altogether shocks my feelings. He knows the shape of every needle round Mont Blanc, and could not tell you now where Threadneedle Street is." The elder Ruskin was a keen man of business, but his heart was not "always in his office," and often in the rhyming letters we seem, as it were, to catch father and son in the act of devising confidential schemes for sentimental tours. The father was in the habit of sending round to his friends any of the effusions which struck him as peculiarly clever. "We think him clever," he writes in reply to a friend's admiration, "and his masters pronounce his talents great for his age. . . . If the Almighty preserves the Boy to me, I am richly blessed." The father used also to carry about with him favourite poems by his son, and his old friend W. H. Harrison, wanting to make an acceptable present, had proofs of Ruskin's contributions to *Friendship's Offering* bound up. The volume accompanied the father on his tours. He eagerly collected, too, any favourable notices in the press of his son's verses. When a hostile criticism appeared, the father was convinced that there were "conspiracies" afoot and "unrelenting foes" abroad. Every scrap of the *juvenilia* was treasured; and in after years when Ruskin had fulfilled, though in a different sort, the promise of his boyhood, the father turned back to the manuscript volumes and therein entered this note: "He has been compared with Goethe, Coleridge, J. Taylor, Burke, Juvenal." Ruskin remembered his father's rushing up to the drawing-room at Herne Hill with wet and flashing eyes with the proof of the first piece of his son's prose ever set in type. The mother questioned eagerly the cause of his excitement. "It's—it's—only *print*," said he.[1] His mother, not less sympathetic at heart, had more of the parental prudence. It is she who utters the notes of

[1] *Deucalion*, vol. i. ch. xiv.

CHAP. I.

warning. "If you think of writing John," she said to her husband, "would you impress on him the propriety of not beginning too eagerly and becoming careless towards the end of his *works*, as he calls them?" And "Mama is continually saying," wrote the boy himself, "that I shall weary out my brain."

V

He was saved from mental over-pressure, and the contemplative side of his training was corrected, by two other formative influences in his early education and character which have yet to be noticed. One was the love of drawing; the other, the love of natural science. He had some faint recollection of drawing out of his head, at the age of four, certain towers and castles "as false as Claude's"; but his first discipline in art began a few years later when he made careful copies of the maps in some old quarto Atlas. These, he says, were a great delight; "the colouring round the edges being a reward for all the tediousness of the printed names; the painting, an excellent discipline of hand and eye; and the lines drawn for the mountains and sea, a most wholesome imitation of steady engraver's work." As a drawing-master in later years he placed map-making among the elementary exercises—laying special stress on the lettering—"you will draw palaces and towers in truer stability after drawing the letters uprightly," and emphasising the advantage therein of "teaching geography, geology, drawing, and colouring all at once."[1] This was a cardinal principle in Ruskin's theory of art as an element in general education. He did not believe in nonsense lines: every exercise which he arranged, either at the Working Men's College or in his Drawing School at Oxford, had the secondary object of fixing in the student's mind some piece of accurate knowledge. He had instinctively fixed on this principle in the earliest exercises by which he trained his own hand and eye; and in an education which in many ways lacked precision and drill, his constant

[1] *The Laws of Fésole*, ch. ix. § 20.

practice with pen and pencil must have been of great value. Examples of his maps, done when he was eight, nine, and ten, have been shown in various exhibitions; and to the same date belong the copies in pen and ink from Cruikshank's vignettes to Grimm's German stories. Here, again, Ruskin, in later years, urged his pupils to adopt his own early models. Nothing in modern line work, he said, approaches Cruikshank's in pure straightforward unaffected rightness of method. The study certainly encouraged in Ruskin an extraordinary gift for drawing delicately with the pen point; his copies from Grimm "show curious accuracy of eye and self-confidence, not having the slightest fear of being unable to carry out my full complement of subjects without making a mess." This practice was not encouraged by Mr. Runciman, Ruskin's earliest drawing-master, who, however, grounded his pupil thoroughly in perspective, and founded the habit of looking for the essential points in the things drawn so as to abstract them decisively. Some of Ruskin's early drawings from scenery or buildings show real feeling; and his constant practice influenced his view of nature. He loved nature with a rapture which was increased by many associations of ideas. But he was never a mere sentimentalist or a romanticist. He had reverence and sensitiveness; but "I never," he says, "should have written sonnets to the celandine, because it is of a coarse yellow and imperfect form; and did not weary myself in wishing that a daisy could see the beauty of its shadow, but in trying to draw the shadow rightly, myself."

A similar influence came from his early interest in natural science. In reviewing the work of his life, he claimed for himself a "balanced unison of artistic sensibility with scientific faculty which enabled me at once to love Giotto and learn from Galileo."[1] The alliteration corresponds with the actual course of his interests. The unison was described in other language by his father. "His geology," he wrote to Dr. John Simon, "is perhaps now (1858) the best part of my son's art, for it enables him to place before us rocks and mountains as they are in nature, in place of the

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 67.

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very bad likenesses of these objects presented to us in most of the old paintings or modern drawings." And again: "From boyhood my son has been an artist, but he has been a geologist from infancy." Geology and mineralogy, not painting and literature, were his earliest love. No acquisition of later years—not his most radiant Turner or choicest missal—gave him pleasure so keen as he felt in his first box of minerals, and no subsequent possession, he tells us, had so much influence on his after life. "In the glittering white broken spar, speckled with galena, by which the walks of the hotel garden at Matlock were made bright, and in the shops of the pretty village, and in many a happy walk among its cliffs," the child pursued his "mineralogical studies on fluor, calcite, and the ores of lead with indescribable rapture." His father's wine-business took him often to Bristol also, and words cannot tell the joy which a collection of Bristol diamonds gave to the child. In journeys to the Lake District, "the little yellow bit of copper ore from Coniston and the garnets from Borrowdale were the beginning of science to me which never could have been otherwise acquired."[1] The ambition of his boyhood was to connect with his name, not a system of art-criticism, but a system of mineralogy. The dream of his early manhood was that he should become, not a master of English, but President of the Geological Society. As a boy he spent many a day in the British Museum, comparing the minerals there with the descriptions of them in Jameson's book. Before he was in his teens, he had begun to compile a Mineralogical Dictionary, and for a present on his fifteenth birthday he chose the *Voyages dans les Alpes* by Saussure, his master in geology. The first of his prose pieces to appear in print was a scientific note; the earliest of his collections was of minerals. The study which he took up in the latest of his unclouded years was that of crystallography; and among his last interests was the cataloguing of specimens of silica. So true is it that at the end he was "but the same youth"; that his life was one "of gradual progress in the things which he began in childish choice."[2]

[1] *Deucalion*, Appendix to vol. i.

[2] *The Eagle's Nest*, § 83.

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CHAPTER II

ENTRANCE INTO HIS KINGDOM

(1833–1836)

"Not what I Have, but what I Do, is my Kingdom. To each is given a certain inward Talent, a certain outward Environment of Fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of Capability."—CARLYLE (*Sartor Resartus*).

IN the lives of men who make a mark in the world, there is often some incident of moment to which they look back as decisive. It may come early or late; amidst the ruins of the Capitol, or on the road to Damascus. "Yet," as Ruskin says, "men are made what they finally become only by the external accidents which are in harmony with their inner nature."[1] It was to a present received on his thirteenth birthday that he looked back as determining the main tenor of his life; and it was the publication of a volume of lithographs in the following year that was the means of opening his kingdom to him.

I

On February 8, 1832, his father's partner, Mr. Henry Telford, gave the boy a copy of Rogers's *Italy*, with Turner's vignettes. Ruskin had at this time never heard of Turner "except in the well-remembered saying of Mr. Runciman's that the world had lately been much dazzled and led away by some splendid ideas thrown out by Turner." Ruskin was both dazzled and led. He fastened on the vignettes at once, took them for his only masters, and set himself to imitate the engravings as far as he possibly could by fine

[1] *Notes on Prout and Hunt.*

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pen shading. His work in life as the interpreter of Turner was decided for him.

In 1833 he had an opportunity of trying to imitate them in a new field. In the spring of that year the elder Ruskin had brought home from the city a copy of Prout's *Sketches in Flanders and Germany*. Father and son looked with delight at the wonderful places, and Mrs. Ruskin asked, Why should they not go and see some of them in reality? Switzerland was included in the plans, and that very evening the boy was busy with the geography of Mont Blanc. They went by Calais and the Rhine to Strassburg, and thence to Schaffhausen and the Gates of the Hills—"opening for me," he says, "a new life—to cease no more except at the Gates of the Hills whence one returns not." "It is not possible to imagine," he adds, of his first sight of the Alps, "in any time of the world, a more blessed entrance into life, for a child of such temperament as mine. . . . I went down that evening from the garden-terrace of Schaffhausen with my destiny fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful." His work in life as the interpreter of Nature was decided for him.

The tour in which Ruskin thus entered into his mountain kingdom was the first of many Swiss and Italian journeys which he made with his parents, and he has given several descriptions of their mode of travel—the more interesting for its contrast with present-day conditions. The beginning of delight, he says, was in choosing the carriage, and in arranging cunningly what was to be virtually the travellers' home for many weeks. There was a front seat outside; four seats inside; and a dickey behind for nurse Anne and the courier. Then came the rapture of starting; the first trot through Camberwell—"the sense of pity for all the inhabitants of Peckham who weren't going, like the pity of lovers on their wedding-day for everybody who is not being married; the change of horses at Dartford, feeling that the last link with Camberwell was broken, that we were already in a new and miraculous world, in which one crowded day of glorious life was worth a year of vulgar days." And then the channel-crossing in the little paddle-steamers of earlier

times, their bits of sail worn and patched like those of an old fishing-boat; and "the immeasurable delight of being able to loiter and swing about just over the bowsprit and watch the plunge of the bows, if there was the least swell or broken sea to lift them, with the hope of Calais at breakfast, and the horses' heads set straight for Mont Blanc to-morrow." Then the first sight of the old belfry—"the epitome, in some sort, of all that makes the continent of Europe interesting, as opposed to new countries." No passage of *Modern Painters* is better known than that in which Ruskin describes "the strange pleasures and thoughts that come about me at the sight of that old tower." The richness of association and the literary skill to fit them to beautiful words were gifts of later years; but already, at this first sight of Calais in 1833, the boy had seized the idea of the place as an epitome, a vestibule. Here is his entry in the prose diary which he kept of the tour:—

"How much has been said of Calais. Every one who has ever set his foot on the French shore, from poor Yorick to the veriest scribbler ever blotted paper, has written half a volume upon Calais. And no marvel. Calais—the busy—the bustling, the —I had almost said the beautiful, for beautiful it was to me, and I believe to every one who enters it as a vestibule—an introduction to France, and to the French. See Calais, and you can see no more, though you should perambulate France from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. It is a little France, a miniature picture, but not the less a resemblance. Stand on the pier and look round you. The sky is a French sky, it is a very turquoise, the sea is a French sea in everything but its want of motion, the air is French air, none of your English boisterous sea puffs that blow the dust in your eyes when you wish to be particularly clear-sighted. No, it is a mere breath, you can't call it a breeze, yet bearing a delicious, a balmy coolness, and a little, a very little smell of the sea."

The start from Calais was made with four stout French horses, driven by a postilion. Travellers of birth or consequence had also their *avant-courier* to gallop in advance, and order the horses at each post-house. "My father,"

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says Ruskin, "would have considered it an insolent and revolutionary trespass on the privileges of the nobility to have travelled in such state"; but he liked a good dinner and the best rooms at the best hotels. They started early, often at six, never later than eight, and travelled slowly, doing not more than fifty miles a day, and arriving at their destination for dinner at four o'clock. After dinner the boy had two hours of delicious exploring by himself; ordered in punctually at seven to tea; and finishing his sketches till bed-time at half-past nine. Three or four days would thus be spent between Calais and Paris, and between Paris and Geneva eight, nine, or ten. Words failed even Ruskin to describe the joy of these enchanted journeys—the afternoon walk among the rocks of Fontainebleau; the wonder of the cathedral aisles of Sens; the geological rambles on the oolite limestones of Mont Bard. The fourth day saw them at Dijon, where it was generally arranged that Sunday should be spent. Then on Monday came "the drive of drives, through the village of Genlis, the fortress of Auxonne, and up the hill to the vine-surrounded town of Dôle; whence, behold at last the limitless ranges of Jura, south and north, beyond the woody plain. Then at Poligny the same afternoon we gathered the first milkwort for that year; and on Tuesday at St. Laurent the wild lily of the valley, and on Wednesday at Morez gentians. And on Thursday one saw from the gained height of Jura the great Alps unfold themselves in their chains and wreaths of incredible crest and cloud."[1]

Such was the old road of most of Ruskin's Continental travels with his parents; but on this first tour in 1833 their route lay from Calais to Cologne and thence up the Rhine. Besides the first sight of the Alps from Schaffhausen, he had on this tour his first sight also of Italy—entering it by the grandest pass, through the Via Mala, and spending rapturous hours on the Lake of Como, seen through Turner's eyes from memories of the vignettes in Rogers's *Italy*. From Milan they journeyed by Genoa, Turin, and the Great St. Bernard to Vevay, Interlaken, and finally Chamouni. A piece of his first description of the valley where so many

[1] *Proserpina*, vol. ii. ch. iv.

of the most fruitful months of his life were to be passed must be given:— CHAP. II.

"There is not another scene like Chamouni throughout all Switzerland. In no other spot that I have seen is the rich luxuriance of the cultivated valley, the flashing splendour of the eternal snow, the impending magnificence of the bare, spiry crag, and the strange, cold rigidity of the surgy glaciers so dreadfully and beautifully combined. There is silence unbroken, no thunder of the avalanche comes crashing from the recesses of the hills, there is no voice from the chasmy glacier, no murmur from the thousand mountain streams, you are in solitude, a strange unearthly solitude, but you feel as if the air were full of spirits."

They returned home by Paris, where Ruskin first saw the daughter of his father's partner, Mr. Domecq. An eventful meeting, as we shall hear presently. Another scene in Paris is interesting. Ruskin was bent upon making a copy of the small Rembrandt in the Louvre, of the Supper at Emmaus. He was too young to obtain a permit in the ordinary way; but a good-natured custode, seeing the woebegone disappointment of the young enthusiast, advised a personal application to the Board. In such broken French as he could muster, the boy appealed to this superior authority, obtained special leave, and made his outline of the picture.

"I had certainly more passionate happiness," said Ruskin in recalling his early travels, "of a quality utterly indescribable to people who never felt the like, and more, in solid quantity, in those three months than most people have in all their lives." The pleasure of the Continental tours, alike for father and for son, was heightened by contrast with their home lives. "My father," he says, "had known the pinch of poverty and borne the stress of steady toil; to find himself living with unstinted power in a palace at Genoa, or floating with absolutely nothing to do or be anxious about down the Grand Canal at Venice, was an extremely marvellous and romantic fact to him, giving a root of inner life to whatever was marvellous and romantic in the scenes themselves." And to the boy, though he could always make himself happy anywhere in a quiet way, "the beauty of the mountains had

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an additional charm of change and adventure which a country-bred child would not have felt."[1] The tour of 1833 excited all his faculties to their utmost strain. It was the occasion of his first printed prose piece, and of an ambitious attempt both in verse and in drawing.

The printing of the prose piece—the appearance of which brought tears of joy to his father's eyes—was due to acquaintance with John Claudius Loudon, editor of *The Magazine of Natural History*. Loudon was himself a man of singular enterprise and originality. He had made some reputation as a landscape-gardener and had established a successful model farm, when he threw up his professional engagements in order to enlarge his agricultural experience by travel on the Continent. He returned to find his investments gone, and set to work with great energy to retrieve his fortunes by the publication of magazines and encyclopædias. There was a time when he had no less than five monthly magazines running at once. Loudon was to publish many of Ruskin's early essays, including those on the Poetry of Architecture. In connexion with that remarkable work, and with some of Ruskin's early poems, he wrote to the author's father the following letter (Nov. 30, 1837):—

"My wife and myself unite in thanking you for your kindly sending *Friendship's Offering*, 1838, and I beg you will also thank your son. Both my wife and myself had recognised 'Christ Church, Oxford' in the *Athenæum* long before we received your letter. It and the other poems are exquisitely beautiful; but not less so in my opinion is an article by your son on the Poetry of Architecture in the December number of the *Architectural Magazine*, of which number I send you a copy. Your son is certainly the greatest natural genius that ever it has been my fortune to become acquainted with; and I cannot but feel proud to think that, at some future period when both you and I are under the turf, it will be stated in the literary history of your son's life that the first article of his which was published was in *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*."

As in duty bound I fulfil the old man's prophecy.

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xvii. § 15.

The subject of the first article by Ruskin which appeared in *Loudon's Magazine* (September 1834, the author being then fifteen) is of interest as linking one of his latest passages with his earliest. Almost the last elaborate piece of writing which came from his pen was a description of the Rhone at Geneva; the piece which Loudon first printed was "On the Causes of the Colour of the Water of the Rhine," and also of the Rhone at Geneva. The boy asked questions rather than answered them,[1] but the note shows closeness of observation; and the same may be said of a second piece, suggested by the tour of 1833, which Loudon published in the following December, "Facts and Considerations on the Strata of Mont Blanc."

These pieces were a by-product of the tour. The winter of 1833 and what time he could steal from school-tasks in 1834 were mainly spent by our young author in composing, writing fair, and drawing vignettes for the decoration, in imitation of Rogers's *Italy*, of a poetical account of the tour. The verses themselves were in imitation of Scott. Portions of them, afterwards printed in *Friendship's Offering*, are quite as good as the tamer passages in their model. Here, for instance, are some lines on St. Goar:—

"Bosomed deep among the hills,
Here old Rhine his current stills,
Loitering the banks between,
As if, enamoured of the scene,
He had forgot his onward way
For a live-long summer day. . . .
—No marvel that the spell-bound Rhine,
Like giant overcome with wine,
Should *here* relax his angry frown,
And, soothed to slumber, lay him down
Amid the vine-clad banks, that lave
Their tresses in his placid wave."

The verses were accompanied by a diary in prose, from which some extracts have already been given. The diary

[1] Any reader who is interested in the subject will find answers in the note supplied to Ruskin's article in the Lib. Ed., vol. i. p. 193.

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is of real interest. The characteristics of many a place that he was to love throughout life, of scenes that he was to analyse and describe, are seized upon from the first. His natural affinity with Turner also appears in many a recognition of particular beauties. This point is very noticeable in what the young Ruskin noted of the scenery of the Meuse:—

"How lightly the waves of the broad Meuse crisped with the first breath of the morning, as we swept over the long bridge that crosses the river from Namur, and looked back on the rich dome of its small but beautiful cathedral, as it began to smile to the first glance of the joyous sun, that was drinking up the delicate mists which clung to the hills, and rested on the valley, in which the fair city reposed so peacefully—and then we dashed along the valley of the Meuse. . . .

"If you wish to see rock scenery in perfection, go to the Meuse, for never were rocks more beautifully disposed, more richly and delicately wooded, or more finely contrasted with the amazing richness of the surrounding scenery."

This, as we may now all know, but as could not then be known, was also Turner's opinion of the scenery of the Meuse. He had travelled in its valley in 1825, and he revisited the place in the year following Ruskin's tour. He brought back with him multitudes of those beautiful sketches, with effects just such as Ruskin described, which may now be seen among the collection of the National Gallery.

II

In 1835, Ruskin, with his parents and cousin Mary, went for a yet longer tour on the Continent, notable for his first visit to Venice. The route on this occasion was through France to Geneva and Chamouni. They then visited the Great St. Bernard and the Swiss Oberland; went on to Innsbruck; crossed the Stelvio to Venice; and returned home by Salzburg, Carlsruhe, Strassburg, and Paris. Of his impressions during the earlier part of this tour, Ruskin has given memorials in a chapter

of *Præterita* ("The Col de la Faucille"). It was on this occasion that he entered into another portion of his kingdom. "My most intense happinesses have of course been," he says, "among mountains. But for cheerful, unalloyed, unwearying pleasure, the getting in sight of Abbeville on a fine summer afternoon, jumping out in the courtyard of the Hotel de l'Europe, and rushing down to see St. Wulfran again before the sun was off the towers, are things to cherish the past for,—to the end." For Abbeville and for Rouen, "I was ready," he adds, "on that 5th of June, and felt that here was entrance for me into immediately healthy labour and joy." Afterwards they went to Dijon, and thence drove by Champagnole through the Jura over the Col de la Faucille. The famous view of the Alps was seen with perfect clearness; but what was new and most arresting was the scenery of the Jura:—

"All Switzerland was there in hope and sensation, and what was less than Switzerland was in some sort better, in its meek simplicity and healthy purity. . . . The Jura cottage has no daintiness of garden nor wealth of farm about it,—is indeed littlemor e than a delicately-built chalet, yet trim and domestic, mildly intelligent of things other than pastoral, watch-making and the like, though set in the midst of the meadows, the gentian at its door, the lily of the valley wild in the copses hard by. My delight in these cottages, and in the sense of human industry and enjoyment through the whole scene, was at the root of all pleasure in its beauty; see the passage afterwards written in the *Seven Lamps* insisting on this as if it were general to human nature thus to admire through sympathy. . . . But the feeling which gave me so much happiness, both then and through life, differed also curiously, in its impersonal character, from that of many even of the best and kindest persons."

In the beginning of the Carlyle-Emerson correspondence, it is written: "Not till we can think that here and there one is thinking of us, and is loving us, does this waste earth become a peopled garden." "My training," continues Ruskin, "produced in me the precisely opposite sentiment. *My* times of happiness had always been when *nobody* was thinking of

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me; and the main discomfort and drawback to all proceedings and designs, the attention and interference of the public—represented by my mother and the gardener. The garden was no waste place to me, because I did not suppose myself an object of interest either to the ants or the butterflies; and the only qualification of the entire delight of my evening walk at Champagnole or St. Laurent was the sense that my father and mother *were* thinking of me, and would be frightened if I was five minutes late for tea. . . . The living inhabitation of the world—the grazing and nesting in it,—the spiritual power of the air, the rocks, the waters, to be in the midst of it, and rejoice and wonder at it, and help it if I could,—happier if it needed no help of mine,—this was the essential love *of Nature* in me, this the root of all that I have usefully become, and the light of all that I have rightly learned."

Of the greater part of this tour, Ruskin wrote a full prose diary at the time. This is almost entirely concerned with geological and other scientific observations. Among his paraphernalia was a "cyanometer" by which to measure the blue of the sky; and observations, such as "Cyan. 14," "Cyan. 10," are frequent in the diary. It is illustrated also with sketches very neatly executed in pen and ink to record geological features of the scenery. Picturesque descriptions are few. The literary and artistic output inspired by this tour of 1835 was prodigious. It was scientific, literary, artistic; in prose and in verse. From the diary, papers were written for *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*. Ruskin intended to describe the events and sentiments of the journey in a poetic diary "in the style of *Don Juan* artfully combined with that of *Childe Harold*. Two cantos of this work were indeed finished—carrying me across France to Chamouni—where I broke down, finding that I had exhausted on the Jura all the descriptive terms at my disposal, and that none were left for the Alps." There is not much of *Don Juan* in these fluently imitative verses, but there are some Byronic rhymes—such as "wind they go" and "indigo," and "Tom Becket is" and "antiquities." Ruskin wrote also rhyming letters to school-friends, Richard Fall

and Sir Willoughby Jones; a few lines of one of them give a good picture of the author on his travels:—

"Then through the whole of Switzerland as merrily went we,
I took my pencil in my hand, my Horace on my knee,
And now I sketched a mountain scene, or anything that did me please,
And then I puzzled out a sentence of the cramp Thucydides."

A further series of pieces suggested by the tour centre round the Great St. Bernard, and show how deeply the Monastery and the Pass had moved him. And, indeed, there are few scenes which, in the days at least before carriage roads, were more calculated to excite feeling and thought than the lonely Hospice on that historic Pass, crowned by the snows of Mont Velan, one of the ruling peaks in the mountain kingdom of which Ruskin claimed possession by the law of love. In his case, the verse of Rogers and the vignettes of Turner must have heightened the interest. He appears to have planned out *Chronicles of St. Bernard* on an elaborate scale; it was characteristic of him that they went no further than an "introduction" and an unfinished tale. In the introduction, there is a description of the morning mass, which may be quoted as one of the "purple patches" among his *juvenilia*:—

"I have heard the sacred music of the mass roll and reverberate among the immeasurable twilight of the vast cathedral aisle, and the cadences of the chaunted *Te Deum* passing over the heads of thousands bowed at once. I have held my breath when, in the hush of a yet more sacred silence, the secret prayers of the population of a city rose up in their multitude, till every breath of the incensed air became holy, and the dim light around was full of supplication; but more sublime than the sacred tones that shake the dusky aisles with their tread, more holy than the hush of the bended multitude, were those few voices, whose praise rose up so strangely amid the stillness of the terrible solitude, and passed away and away, till the dead air that sleeps for ever and for ever, voicelessly, like a lifeless spirit upon the lonely mountains, was wakened from its cold silence, and that solitary

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voice of praise was breathed up into the still blue of the heaven rising from the high Alps as from one vast altar to the ear of the Most High, sounding along the vacancy of the illimitable wilderness where God was, and God only."

The piece is, however, written for the most part in a lighter vein. From this point of view, it is not so successful as a dramatic sketch in verse—*The Ascent of the St. Bernard.* This is one of the brightest descriptions of Swiss travel to be found in literature of that sort. It brings before the reader with great vividness the interests and demeanour of Ruskin at this time, and reveals the character of his parents with frank simplicity. The cousin, the courier, and the nurse—all of them known to readers of *Præterita*—are also sharply sketched. The piece as a whole shows a quiet humour and a power of characterisation somewhat remarkable in a boy of sixteen. A few lines will show the sort of thing:—

MASTER R. (*looking out of the window*).

The shadows on the mountain flanks
Are grey with morning haziness.

MR. R. (*impatiently*).

What can keep the char-à-bancs?
Hang the fellow's laziness!

MISS R. (*speculatively*).

They say it's cold, and wet enough to soak one;
I wonder if I'll need to put my cloak on.

MRS. R. (*peaceably*).

We'll see, my dear, in time; you'd better take it.

MASTER R. (*still looking out of the window*).

With many a range of mountain white
The Valais meets the morn.
The Drance is deep, the Drance is bright;
With thousand foam-globes driving white
Fast and well his billows roll—

SALVADOR (*below the window*).

Sind sie schnell! ja, das geht wohl.

It is interesting that at this period Ruskin should have found verse a better medium than prose for playful essays of

this kind. The fragment, *Velasquez, a Novice*, which the author embodied in his *Chronicles of St. Bernard*, is interesting as his only attempt to write a novel. The attempt does not belie his self-criticism that he could not write a story.[1]

"Sketches innumerable I have," wrote Ruskin to his school-friend, Richard Fall, "which you must not yawn over, poetry interminable I have which you must not sleep over." Over the prose and poetry which the tour of 1835 inspired it is permissible to yawn or sleep; but the pencil drawings which he brought back with him are admirable. They were found really interesting, he says, even to artists; and it was decided to promote him from the teaching of Mr. Runciman to a course of lessons in water-colour from Copley Fielding. He made some progress, but presently returned, yet for a few years, to the pencil outline. He had also taken some lessons in oils, and afterwards occasionally used that medium; but a rhyming letter to his father shows that he did not take kindly to it:—

"I cannot bear to paint in oil,
C. Fielding's tints alone for me!
The other costs me double toil,
And wants some fifty coats to be
Splashed on each spot successively.
Faugh, *wie es stinckt!*"

III

The more formal part of Ruskin's education during these years was in the hands of the Rev. Thomas Dale, an Evangelical of some distinction in the Church as successively Vicar of St. Pancras, Canon of St. Paul's, and Dean of Rochester. In 1833 he was incumbent of St. Matthew's Chapel, Denmark Hill, and kept a private school in Grove Lane, Camberwell. This was within walking distance of Herne Hill, and to it Ruskin was sent after the summer tour of 1833. He was only a day-boy and mixed but little in the life of the school. He walked down with his father

[1] See *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 64.

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after breakfast, carrying his blue bag of books, came home to half-past-one dinner, and prepared his lessons in the evening for next day. He was too much of an innocent to be bullied; and chaff had no effect on him, "the fountain of pure conceit in my own heart sustaining me," he says, "serenely against all depreciation whether by master or companion." Among his schoolfellows he had Edmund Oldfield, afterwards of the British Museum, and the sons of Colonel Matson, of Woolwich. They sometimes invited Ruskin to their home, and in the Colonel "I saw," he says, "such calm type of truth, gentleness, and simplicity as I have myself found in soldiers and sailors only, and so admirable to me that I have never been able since those Woolwich times to gather myself up against the national guilt of war, seeing that such men were made by the discipline of it." Against his master, Ruskin was set, as it chanced, from the first. The Latin Grammar out of which his mother had taught him was that of Alexander Adam. "On the first day," says Ruskin, "when I went to take my seat in Mr. Dale's schoolroom, I carried my old grammar to him, in a modest pride, expecting some encouragement and honour for the accuracy with which I could repeat, on demand, some hundred and sixty close-printed pages of it. But Mr. Dale threw it back to me with a fierce bang upon his desk, saying (with accent and look of seven-times-heated scorn), 'That's a *Scotch* thing.'"[1] The master spoke perhaps in play; but the effect of his words was as of double-edged blasphemy to a pupil who was the son of an Edinburgh High School Boy, and of a mother who had laboured in the book with him since he could read; "and in that one action he rejected himself from being my master, and I thenceforward learned all he told me only because I had to do it." The regular tuition under Mr. Dale was broken off by a serious attack of pleurisy which Ruskin had in the spring of 1835, and the long Continental tour, already described, followed; but in 1836 his further education was again entrusted to Mr. Dale, who was now Vicar of St. Bride's, Fleet Street, and Professor

[1] *Fiction, Fair and Foul*, § 95.

of English literature at King's College. To his lectures at the College, and to private classes conducted by him, Ruskin was sent. The lectures were on early English literature. "His quotation of 'Knut the king came sailing by' stayed with me," says Ruskin, "and I think that was about all I learnt during the summer."

"My severest and chiefly antagonist master," Ruskin calls Mr. Dale. The antagonism comes out in an essay by the pupil which was found in the tutor's desk. In 1836 Dale had issued an edition, with a commendatory preface, of *The Student's Guide* by the Rev. John Todd, an American divine. The work, which passed through many editions, both in that country and in this, affords amusing illustration of the kind of literary guidance then current in some Evangelical circles. "Beware of Bad Books," says the Rev. John Todd, and, among them, of Byron, Bulwer, and Scott. He admits that he had read Byron; it was his duty so to do, in order to sound "the rocks and quicksands" in the sea of literature which virtuous youth must avoid; his consolation was in the thought "that what is putrid must soon pass away" and that the works of Byron "will quickly pass from notice and be exiled from the libraries of all virtuous men." As for Bulwer and Scott, whom the reverend gentleman classed with Hume and Paine, he solemnly declares to us "that the only good which he is conscious of ever having received from them, is a deep impression that men who possess talents of such compass and power, and so perverted in their application, must meet the day of judgment under a responsibility which would be cheaply removed by the price of a world." Such was the guidance to English literature commended by Ruskin's tutor. Now, Ruskin believed himself to be quite as good an Evangelical as Dale; but at this time he was very fond of Bulwer's novels, and from his earliest years he had been brought up on Scott and Byron. Dale's commendation of the Rev. Mr. Todd was flat "blasphemy" again, and Ruskin was given a delicious opportunity of saying what he thought of it. Dale had set as a theme for an essay "Does the Perusal of Works of Fiction act favourably or unfavourably on the

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Moral Character?" Ruskin seized the occasion to write a glowing panegyric upon Bulwer, a reasoned account of the Great Magician's moral teaching, and an impassioned defence of Byron against the criticisms of certain "crawling things." He enjoys himself in this essay hugely, not least, we may imagine, when with withering scorn he likens certain opponents of his views to "old maids of jaundiced eye and acidulated lip," and dismisses as "philosophers falsely so-named" those grave and reverend teachers "who assert that whatever is amusing must be criminal." The original MS. of this crude but vigorously written essay may be seen in the British Museum.

Of the same date is another, and a more remarkable, essay. Ruskin was now seventeen, and his first defence of Turner—the germ of his principal book—belongs to this year (1836). It also was inspired by indignant protest. In 1836 Turner exhibited at the Royal Academy the pictures in which his later manner was first displayed with his utmost skill and enthusiasm. They were attacked in *Blackwood's Magazine* in an article, as Ruskin in later years described it, "of sufficiently telling ribaldry, expressing with some force, and extreme discourtesy, the feelings of the pupils of Sir George Beaumont at the appearance of these unaccredited views of nature." Of the "Juliet and her Nurse," Maga said that it represented "neither sunlight, moonlight, nor starlight, nor firelight"; and that the scene (laid by some freak of Turner in Venice, instead of Verona) was "thrown higgledy-piggledy together, streaked blue and pink, and thrown into a flour tub." Of "Rome from Mount Aventine," the critic said that it was "a most unpleasant mixture, wherein white gamboge and raw sienna are, with childish execution, daubed together"; but it was of the "Mercury and Argus," the best picture of the three and one of Turner's masterpieces, that *Blackwood* was most contemptuous:—

"We think the 'Hanging Committee' should be *suspended* from their office for admitting his 'Mercury and Argus.' It is perfectly childish. All blood and chalk. There was not the least occasion for a Mercury to put out Argus's eyes; the horrid glare would have made him shut the whole hundred, and have made

Mercury stone blind. Turner reminds us of the man who sold his shadow, and that he might not appear singular, will not let anything in the world have a shadow to show for love or money. . . . He has robbed the sun of his birthright to cast shadows. Whenever Nature shall dispense with them too, and shall make trees like brooms, and this green earth to alternate between brimstone and white, set off with brightest blues that no longer shall keep their distance; when cows shall be made of white paper, and milk-white figures represent pastoral, and when human eyes shall be happily gifted with a kaleidoscopic power to patternize all confusion, and shall become ophthalmia proof, then will Turner be a greater painter than ever the world yet saw, or than ever the world, constituted as it is at present, wishes to see."

This ribald attack "raised me," says Ruskin, "to the height of 'black anger' in which I have remained nearly ever since"; and the boy sat down to write a reply. His father thought it right to ask Turner's leave for the publication of the paper, and a fair copy, in the author's best hand, was sent to Queen Anne Street. Turner's reply was characteristic:—

"47, Queen Ann (*sic*) Street West, *October* 6*th*, 1836.—My dear Sir,—I beg to thank you for your zeal, kindness, and the trouble you have taken in my behalf, in regard of the criticism of *Blackwood's Magazine* for October, respecting my works; but I never move in these matters, they are of no import save mischief and the meal tub, which Maga fears for by my having invaded the flour tub.

"*P.S.*—If you wish to have the manuscript back, have the goodness to let me know. If not, with your sanction, I will send it on to the possessor of the picture of Juliet."

The possessor of the picture (now in Lord Strathcona's collection) was Mr. Munro of Novar, into whose hands this interesting piece thus came. What subsequently became of it I do not know; and at the time of writing *Præterita* Ruskin could find no fragment of it. At a later date a copy (not in Ruskin's hand) was found in an old note-book at Brantwood, and the text has been printed in the Library Edition. It is a most characteristic production. Alike in substance and in style, it may be described as a prelude to *Modern Painters*. *Blackwood* had criticised Turner's pictures as

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being "out of nature"; Ruskin maintained, on the other hand, that they were true to the vital facts of nature, while giving at the same time "the consecration and the poet's dream." And something of "the scarlet and the gold" of the painter's fancy passed into the young critic's defence. The style was hereafter to be more fully informed, and more deeply suffused with passion; to be chastened also and matured; but the essential Ruskin is already here:—

"The critic affirms that he has deprived the sun of his birthright to cast shadows. Now the manner in which Turner makes his visible sunbeams walk over his foregrounds towards the spectator, is one of his most peculiar beauties; and in this very picture of 'Mercury and Argus' it is inimitably fine,—and is produced by the exquisite perspective of his shadows, and the singular lurid tints of his reflected lights. The connoisseur remarks, a few pages further on, that '*even* composition is *often* made out by light, shade, and colour.' Will he inform us what else it could be made out by?"

"Turner's imagination is Shakespearian in its mightiness. Had the scene of 'Juliet and her Nurse' risen up before the mind of a poet, and been described in 'words that burn,' it had been the admiration of the world: but, placed before us on the canvass, it becomes—what critics of the brush and pallet may show their wit upon at the expense of their judgement; and what real artists and men of feeling and taste *must* admire, but dare not attempt to imitate. Many-coloured mists are floating above the distant city, but such mists as you might imagine to be aetherial spirits, souls of the mighty dead breathed out of the tombs of Italy into the blue of her bright heaven, and wandering in vague and infinite glory around the earth that they have loved. Instinct with the beauty of uncertain light, they move and mingle among the pale stars, and rise up into the brightness of the illimitable heaven, whose soft, sad blue eye gazes down into the deep waters of the sea for ever,—that sea whose motionless and silent transparency is beaming with phosphor light, that emanates out of its sapphire serenity like bright dreams breathed into the spirit of a deep sleep. And the spires of the glorious city rise indistinctly bright into those living mists, like pyramids of pale fire from some

vast altar; and amidst the glory of the dream, there is as it were the voice of a multitude entering by the eye,—arising from the stillness of the city like the summer wind passing over the leaves of the forest, when a murmur is heard amidst their multitude." CHAP. II.

The whole piece shows how effectively Ruskin had already occupied much of the ground on which his defence of Turner was to be based. It cannot, however, be considered other than fortunate that Turner discouraged his young champion from entering the fray. The years which intervened before the germ of *Modern Painters* bore fruit were full of various instruction, equipping Ruskin the better for his task.

The essay is dated October 1st, 1836. Three weeks later he went up to matriculate at Oxford. His name had been put down at Christ Church some time before, and his father now consulted the College authorities whether a person in his position might without impropriety enter his son as a gentleman-commoner. The old Dean (Gaisford) said that there was no objection, if the fees were paid; the college-tutor hinted that there might be some advantage in escaping the entrance examination which ordinary commoners had to undergo; and the point was clenched by the fact that gentlemen-commoners wore velvet caps and flowing silk gowns. In January 1837 Ruskin drove down to Oxford with his mother, and entered into residence.

He was now a University "man"; but his childhood had been ceaselessly fenced, and even now the bridle and the blinkers were not to be taken off. His affections had been dormant for lack of opportunity, but he yearned for romance. "While I have indeed," he said in 1875, "the sincerest admiration for the characters of Phocion, Cincinnatus, and Caractacus, and am minded, so far as I may, to follow the example of those worthy personages, my own private little fancy is still, as it always was, to find Prince Ahmed's arrow and marry the Fairy Paribanou."[1] The Fairy Paribanou was presently to appear upon the scene; but as equipment for winning her, the limitations of his childhood had given him nothing better than "a curious combination of Mr. Traddles, Mr. Toots, and Mr. Winkle."

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 54.

CHAPTER III

OXFORD

(1837–1840)

> "Oxford taught me as much Greek and Latin as she could; and though I think she might have told me that fritillaries grew in Iffley meadow, it was better that she left me to find them out for myself, than that she should have told me, as nowadays she would, that the painting on them was only to amuse the midges. For the rest, the whole time I was there, my mind was simply in the state of a squash before 'tis a peascod."—*Præterita.*

A SONG that was popular in my school-days described the advent at Oxford of "a freshman so modest: The figure he cut was the oddest, All Puritan stocking and starch." Ruskin must have cut some such figure when he went up to the University in his mother's care, and seated himself—a wine-merchant's son, an innocent, a milksop, with no public school behind him—at the table of the gentlemen-commoners in Christ Church Hall.

I

The group of young men among whom he found himself included a few of studious tastes, some of intellectual ability, and many of high spirits. Among them were Francis Charteris, now Lord Wemyss; Lord March, afterwards sixth Duke of Richmond; Lord Desart, Lord Carew, Lord Emlyn, Lord Kildare; Stephen Fox Strangways, afterwards Lord Stavordale; Sir Matthew Tierney, presently of the Coldstream Guards; and Robert Grimston, famous as cricketer, boxer, steeplechaser. Ruskin regarded his companions primarily, he tells us, from an æsthetic point of view. The "delicate beauty" of Charteris raised him at once to the position of

an idol; "the grandest type of European Circassian race hitherto visible to me." Lord Desart, too, interested him greatly as "a young man of superb personal beauty and noble gifts of mind." But however æsthetically admirable to him, the youths into whose society Ruskin was suddenly thrown out of the cloistered seclusion of his suburban home must have been poles asunder from him. The position might have seemed hopeless. Yet somehow he made his way among them; establishing even a place, of a sort, in their regard. The truth is, as an old Student of the House has said, that Christ Church, therein resembling other colleges that might be named, "is very like the House of Commons in temper; a man, however plain of origin, however humble in position, is tolerated and listened to with respect, if he is sincere, honest, and 'knows his subject.'"[1] And so they came to tolerate him, though not without some preliminary testing of his quality. In one respect their treatment of him is wholly to their credit. Ruskin was probably the only gentleman-commoner who was ever attended by his mother throughout his Oxford career, and whose father came down to join the domestic circle at the end of every week. They had the good sense, it is true, to appear little in public with him, but their presence was well known. Once he was seen with them in the shop of Mr. Ryman, the print-seller, and shamefacedly he was ill at ease. Many years afterwards, bethinking him perhaps of Johnson at Uttoxeter, he did public penance by exhibiting himself in one of his books, baresouled in that act of recreance.[2] Yet "none of the men," he tells us, "through my whole college career, ever said one word in depreciation of vintner papa and his old-fashioned wife, or in sarcasm at my habitually spending my evenings with my mother." On the other hand, when he had been seen acting as cicerone to a lady-visitor, and mentioned superfluously at dinner that she was the Countess Diane de Maison, they had no mercy on him for a month afterwards.

"I was received," he says, "as a good-humoured and inoffensive little cur, contemptuously, yet kindly, among the

[1] *Ruskin at Oxford and Other Studies*, by Dean Kitchin.

[2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 63.

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dogs of race at the gentlemen-commoners' table." He scored a good mark in their esteem by happening one day, in complete innocence and good faith, but to the exquisite joy of his companions, to ask a question which the College lecturer appeared to be unable to answer. The moment they got into the quad, he was admiringly congratulated on the consummate manner in which he had "floored the tutor." Another exploit was less successful. It was an institution of the House that every week the undergraduates should write an essay, and the essay pronounced the best be read in hall on Saturday afternoon to the enforced audience of the other undergraduates. The usual practice with regard to these weekly exercises has been recorded by Dean Kitchin. "Randall, the great hosier of the High, or 'Cicero' Cook, the learned scout of Christ Church, used to undertake, for a consideration, to compose the views of the haughty undergraduate. The rest usually aimed at filling their regulation three pages with few words, long and well spread out." Imagine, then, the enormity of the offence committed by Ruskin, a gentleman-commoner, first in composing an elaborate discourse and next in reciting every word of it, though the exercise occupied a full quarter of an hour! No wonder that words flew about as soon as the assembly was dismissed — words "varied in expression through every form and manner of English language, from the Olympian sarcasm of Charteris to the level-delivered volley of Grimston"! Yet Grimston came to tolerate the greenhorn in time, and even "condescended to take me with him one day to a tavern across Magdalen Bridge to hear him elucidate from the landlord some points of the horses entered for the Derby—an object only to be accomplished by sitting with indifference on a corner of the kitchen table, and carrying on a dialogue with careful pauses, and more by winks than words."

Ruskin was tolerated, then, it seems, even among the young "bloods." Mr. Aubrey de Vere, on the publication of the first volume of *Modern Painters*, wrote: "I am told that the author's name is Ruskin, and that he was considered at College as an odd sort of man who would never do

anything." Dean Liddell's description of Ruskin (in a letter written in 1837) is somewhat different: "I am going to drink tea with Adolphus Liddell to-night, and see the drawings of a very wonderful gentleman-commoner here who draws wonderfully. He is a very strange fellow, always dressing in a greatcoat with a brown velvet collar, and a large neck-cloth tied over his mouth,[1] and living quite in his own way among the odd set of hunting and sporting men that gentlemen-commoners usually are. Ruskin tells them that they like their own way of living and he likes his; and so they go on, and I am glad to say they do not bully him, as I should have been afraid they would."[2] He did not, however, escape some "ragging." Osborne Gordon told Holman Hunt that "Ruskin had been made the subject of a great deal of horse-play on account of his avoidance of sports."[3] It has been reported that Acland's attention was first directed to Ruskin by seeing him being ridden round Tom Quad by some of the rowdier gentlemen-commoners, and that he interfered to protect the victim. Another version represents that Acland's indignation was aroused by an attempt to make the boyish-looking freshman tipsy at a wine party.[4] A third story describes how some noisy spirits invaded Ruskin's rooms one night, breaking down his oak and rushing into his bedroom. Ruskin received them in his dressing-gown. "Gentlemen," he said, with a sweet smile, "I am sorry I cannot now entertain you as I should wish; but my father, who is engaged in the sherry trade, has put it into my power to invite you all

[1] These were fashions to which Ruskin remained constant. On State occasions, however, he indulged, as a young man, in "a white satin waistcoat with gold sprigs, and a high dress-coat with bright buttons. Picture, then," says Mr. Collingwood, "the young Ruskin in those dressy days. A portrait was once sent to Brantwood of a dandy in a green coat of wonderful cut, supposed to represent him in his youth, but suggesting Lord Lytton's 'Pelham' rather than the homespun-suited seer of Coniston. 'Did you ever wear a coat like that?' I asked. 'I'm not so sure that I didn't,' said he" (*Life and Work of John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 68).

[2] *Henry George Liddell*, by the Rev. H. L. Thompson, p. 215 *n.*

[3] *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, vol. i. p. 323.

[4] *Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, by J. B. Atlay, p. 41.

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to wine to-morrow evening. Will you come?" The rioters withdrew with "Three cheers for Ruskin!"[1] Thus early did he illustrate a power which he had throughout life of disarming any opponents with whom he came in personal contact. Of an earlier "wine" Ruskin himself gave a description in a lecture to the Woolwich cadets in 1869:—

"Thirty years ago, I, a most inexperienced freshman, went to my first college supper. . . . There (for this beginning of college education was compulsory), I choosing ladlefuls of punch instead of claret, because I was then able, unperceived, to pour them into my waistcoat instead of down my throat, stood it out to the end, and helped to carry four of my fellow students, one of them the son of the head of a college, head foremost, down stairs and home."[2]

These revels, of which he added perhaps too sanguinely that "such things are no more," made a lasting impression on him and served more than once to point a moral in his economic writings.[3] It is not so certain, by the way, that the liquor went only to the waistcoat, for elsewhere, in recalling the same occasion, he says that he walked across Peckwater to his own rooms, deliberating as he went whether there was any immediately practicable trigonometric method of determining whether he was walking straight.

[1] Obituary notice of Ruskin in the *Times*, Jan. 22, 1900.

[2] *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 148.

[3] For instance: a Professor of Economics had defined "spending" as "direct employment in an industrial operation." "It is a pretty phrase," replied Ruskin, "and one which also suits your University audience — doubtless many an undergraduate would be glad to have every piece of documentary currency he had left behind him docketed on its appearance at home—'To directly employed in industrial operations, so much.' But then there are so many industrial operations! In old Oxford days I have seen every fragment of food left on our supper tables industriously thrown into the street—and the floor industriously flooded with wine — while pale mothers and sisters at home were providing for these operations by divers others—dimly feeling, they, in spite of political economy, that there was a difference between "spending" and "laying by." They ought to have felt, you will say, comforted, because in the end —"all reached the hands of producers." I am not sure that the College scouts, who with applause received the ruin, could produce much in the morning except broken glass" (Library Ed., vol. xvii. p. 495).

Ruskin's mother, from her lodgings in the High Street, kept such watch and ward as she might, and her letters to her husband give us a few glimpses of undergraduate life. She was insistent upon her son keeping early hours, but reckoned without his friends. "It does little good sporting his oak," she reports in an account of an evening when Lord Desart and Bob Grimston climbed in through his window; "they say midshipmen and Oxonians have more lives than a cat, and they have need of them if they run such risks." What would she have said if she had lived to see a certain "Climbers' Guide to "—I forget what College at which University? In another letter she refers to the incident of the offending essay. A bonfire was lighted in Peckwater, it seems; presumably to make short work of Ruskin's long-winded production; but he judiciously escaped to bed, and on this occasion was not molested otherwise than by word of mouth. That Ruskin was capable of holding his own and making his way is clear from the fact of his election, in his second term, to the exclusive Christ Church Society. "Simeon, Acland, and Mr. Denison proposed him," his mother reports; "Lord Carew and Broadhurst supported." A letter from Ruskin to his father gives a spirited account of the racing set and of his own more sedate diversions :—

"I suppose Mamma had told you about the races. I should have liked to have seen Desart in his jockey cap and jacket. There was very high betting—one man lost £1500. All the Dons of the University were assembled at the Dean's house—the result of their lucubrations is unknown, but the riders are afraid of Collections. When they were returning, the proctors, particularly Hussey, were excessively active endeavouring to catch them, dashing at the horses' heads, and endeavouring to seize the bridles; but they whipped their horses by at full speed; one fellow knocked off Hussey's cap and drove neatly over it. He only succeeded in catching two men in a gig, whose horse was tired and could not be got into speed.

"I had a chess party last night, had invited [Adolphus] Liddell —and before he came, in came Goring, by chance, with the same intention. He is an agreeable, gentlemanly man, and a fine

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player. Our game lasted an hour and a half, and he beat me; but I don't think he'll do it again. During the game Carew came in, and then Tierney. Liddell appeared at last; he is also a good player, and it was a drawn game. Liddell was soliloquising to this effect upon the figure he should cut at collections: 'I've had three lectures a week from Mr. Brown, and have attended five in the term; I've had ditto from Mr. Kynaston, and have attended two in the term; and three a week from Mr. Hill, and I've attended three; and I'll be dashed if I don't come off as well as the whole set of you.' . . .

"I hope I shall have more interesting information for you when you come up on Saturday—Friday I hope it will be, if the judges will evacuate our rooms. It is nearly nine o'clock."

The rooms here referred to, which were used as the Judges' Lodgings at assize time, were occupied by Ruskin's mother throughout his three years of residence (1837–39). The house (90 High Street), containing some good sixteenth-century wood-work, was formerly in possession of Christ Church, but is now occupied by University College. A sketch by Ruskin is extant; it must have been made on the floor, and magnifies the height, but is otherwise true to the panelled and ceiled sitting-room as it still exists. Ruskin's own rooms were in Peckwater quadrangle, looking over the gravelled square to the Palladian Library. Of the particular staircase I have been unable to trace record or tradition. "I was vexed a little," he says, in recording his first impressions at Oxford, "because I was not in an oriel window looking out on a Gothic chapel"; but for the moment "felt that, though dull, it was all very grand; and that the architecture, though Renaissance, was bold, learned, well-proportioned, and variously didactic." Later on he was promoted to Tom Quad (first floor left, No. 4), and for his last term (of regular residence) he was in lodgings in St. Aldate's. He ran what accounts with the tradesmen he liked, and his mother paid the bills weekly without demur. His father, well disposed to be extravagant in anything that concerned his son's state or comfort, boggled only at his taste for minerals, and a piece of Cornish chalcedony bought for 11s.

caused a domestic jar. On Ruskin's twenty-first birthday, his father presented him with a Turner drawing (Winchelsea), and with a sum in the stocks bringing in £200 a year. CHAP. III.

II

Ruskin made his way at Christ Church, says Dean Kitchin in the passage above quoted, as a man "who knew his subject." The subject was drawing; and his mother sent word to her husband of the way in which their son's fame in this sort became noised abroad :—

"Mr. Liddell and Mr. Gaisford (junior) turned up. John was glad he had wine to offer, but they would not take any; they had come to see sketches. John says Mr. Liddell looked at them with the eye of a judge and the delight of an artist, and swore they were the best sketches he had ever seen. John accused him of quizzing, but he answered that he really thought them excellent."

To like effect Dean Kitchin gives a letter from one of Ruskin's contemporaries at Christ Church, Mr. W. Hughes Hughes: "I myself, on June 2, 1838, coming home from a late (or early) party, found Ruskin sitting near the central basin in Tom Quad; and looking over his shoulder, was charmed at the sight of his beautiful water-colour sketch, in what was then called Prout's style, of the Tower. From that time I always felt great respect for Ruskin, having found that he had some talent."

Even the Dean sent for the gentleman-commoner's portfolio and signified his approval. Ruskin drew much at Oxford; and Blenheim, with its fine collection of pictures then undispersed, was within distance of a walk or drive. "I go over to Blenheim as often as I can," he wrote to a friend, "where there is a most pure and instructive Raffaelle of his early time—painted at Perugia—I don't think there is such another in England." This is the "Ansidei Madonna," and Ruskin's admiration of it lasted to the end. A few years after the picture had been bought for the nation, I was talking to him in Trafalgar Square. "The new Raphael," he

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said, "is lovely—quite the loveliest Raphael in the world; the 'San Sisto' is dark and brown beside it." Ruskin also gave some time at Oxford to music. For some years his parents had taken him every season to the opera, and he had heard Grisi and Malibran with delight. There was a Musical Society at Christ Church, under instruction of the cathedral organist, William Marshall, by whose encouragement Ruskin was brought to the point of learning to sing a Florentine canzonet and to play the accompaniments to Bellini's "A te, o cara" and other songs of similarly tender purport. He never learnt to read with ease, but he took music lessons at intervals throughout his life and was fond, in his later years, of putting favourite verses to tunes. There were other subjects and studies which occupied much of his time, thought, and emotions during these years at Oxford (1837–39). His companions went their ways, and he went his. He was a lover, pouring out the sorrows of his heart in verse; a poet, contributing pieces in other kinds to Annuals and Miscellanies; a writer on the Fine Arts, discussing divers questions with an air already of authority and decision in Magazines and Proceedings. Of these extra-academic activities, account is given in the next chapter. The most important of them were his contributions on the Theory of Perspective and the Poetry of Architecture, to *Loudon's Architectural Magazine*. A curious glimpse of Ruskin's anonymous repute on this account is given us in the memoirs of Thomas Sopwith, a mining engineer of celebrity in his day, a geologist, and an amateur artist. He was staying with Dr. Buckland at Christ Church, and Ruskin was invited to dinner to meet him. Sopwith describes a long conversation with Ruskin, in which the latter disclosed himself as the author of the essays. "It was truly delightful," writes Sopwith, "to become acquainted with the ingenious author of those very able papers, and still more so to find that we exactly coincided in opinion." A day or two later, Dr. Buckland again had young Ruskin to meet his guest, who records in his diary the pleasure he had in looking at the gentleman-commoner's "four large folio volumes" of drawings. "Those who delight in seeing correct and vivid

portraits of distant scenery, in beholding splendid architectural combinations, and in admiring the highest efforts of art, will readily appreciate my enjoyment in looking over these beautiful volumes."

Ruskin was thus, it seems, one of the "show" young men at Christ Church; but his artistic and literary preoccupations did not advance him in the formal studies of the University. He worked, however, for six hours a day, and the routine was this:—

"I never missed chapel; and in winter got an hour's reading before it. Breakfast at nine,—half-an-hour allowed for it to a second, for Captain Marryat with my roll and butter. College lectures till one. Lunch, with a little talk to anybody who cared to come in, or share their own commons with me. At two, Buckland or other professor's lecture. Walk till five, hall dinner, wine either given or accepted, and quiet chat over it with the reading men, or a frolic with those of my own table; but I always got round to the High Street to my mother's tea at seven, and amused myself till Tom rang in, and I got with a run to Canterbury gate, and settled to a steady bit of final reading till ten."

In his second year (March 1838) came the ordeal of "Smalls," when Robert Lowe was one of the examiners. Ruskin described the scene in a lively letter to his father:—

"Nice thing to get over; quite a joke, as everybody says when they've got through with the feathers on. It's a kind of emancipation from freshness — a thing unpleasant in an egg, but dignified in an Oxonian—very. Lowe very kind; Kynaston ditto — nice fellows — urbane. How they *do* frighten people! There was one man all but crying with mere fear. Kynaston had to coax him like a child. Poor fellow! he had some reason to be afraid; did his logic shockingly. People always take up logic because they fancy it doesn't require a good memory, and there is nothing half so productive of pluck; they *never* know it. I was very cool when I got into it; found the degree of excitement agreeable; nibbled the end of my pen, and grinned at Kynaston over the table as if *I* had been going to pluck *him*. They always smile when they mean pluck."

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In his Autobiography, he gives the result and a further reminiscence:—

> "The diagrams of Euclid being given me, as was customary with the Euclid examination paper, I handed the book back to the examiner, saying scornfully, 'I don't want any figures, Sir.' 'You had better take them,' replied he, mildly; which I did, as he bid me; but I could then, and can still, dictate blindfold the demonstration of any problem, with any letters, at any of its points. I just scraped through, and no more, with my Latin writing, came creditably off with what else had to be done, and my tutor was satisfied with me,—not enough recognizing that the 'little go' had asked, and got out of me, pretty nearly all I had in me, or was ever likely to have in that kind."

His Latin, he says, was the worst in the University, and to the end of his Oxford career he never could get into his head where the Pelasgi lived or where the Heraclidæ returned from; though, to be sure, these items of information are in some dispute to this day. Plato he loved from the first line he read; but Aristotle was less sympathetic. His copies of the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* are preserved in the library of the British Museum; both volumes appear to have been used less for grammatical or philosophical notes than as affording convenient spaces for architectural drawings. That he knew his *Ethics* well, is obvious from his writings; his "detestation" of the *Rhetoric* as a school-book (recorded on the fly-leaf of the Museum copy) appears from a well-known passage in *Modern Painters*. Tacitus, he says, was too hard for him; Terence he found "dull and stupid beyond patience"; and Lucretius he detested with "a bitterly wholesome detestation," never repented of. "It seems to me, looking back," he wrote in some autobiographical notes, "as if I never knew or read any Latin at all, except—of all books in the world—Juvenal, the worst and ugliest that could have been put into my hands,—but which I did master, and which founded sternly my first notions of national fault and dishonour in Rome, and, so far as she has followed falling Rome, in England." Among the Greek classics, he declares that he never could construe a line of Homer

(though Pope's Homer he knew by heart); Sophocles he found "dismal, and in subject disgusting"; but Euripides he tasted with pleasure. The poet, however, who most attracted him at Oxford was Aristophanes, who remained a favourite with him always. "I owe more of the general tone and form of my political thoughts to Aristophanes," he said, "than to any other writer, living or dead." Other favourite poets were Hesiod and Pindar, but the study of them was only taken up in later years. At Oxford "Herodotean history got well settled down into me"; it inspired many of his better poems, and served to illustrate many a passage in his books. But probably the best discipline which he owed to the University was a knowledge of "every syllable of Thucydides." The "intricate strength," "the scorn of construction with which he knotted his meaning into a rhythmic strength that writhed and wrought every way at once," interested Ruskin intensely in Thucydides as a writer; "while his subject, the central tragedy of all the world, the suicide of Greece, was felt by me with a sympathy in which the best powers of my heart and brain were brought up to their fullest, for my years." Ruskin rated his classical attainments low, and an exact scholar he never became; yet the vitality and freshness of his classical allusions are remarkable, and few English writers have cited, to such happy purpose, so many Greek and Latin authors.[1] Some of his biographers, noticing this fact, have suggested that his account of neglected opportunities for classical study at Oxford should be taken with copious grains of salt. But the note-books, diaries, and letters to which I have had

[1] "We are continually struck," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "in the Oxford lectures with the range of reading, the subtle comments, and the force of sympathy with which he had reached the inmost soul of so many classical writers, both prose and verse, Roman as well as Greek. Nor has any Professor of Greek, of Poetry, or of Philosophy, touched with a wand of such magic power so many inimitable passages of Homer, Hesiod, Æschylus, Pindar, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Xenophon, Lucian; or again of Virgil, Horace, and Catullus" (*John Ruskin*, 1902, p. 136). A list of classical writers touched by Ruskin would include also Anacreon, Callimachus, Claudian, Euripides, Herodotus, Juvenal, Livy, Lucretius, Sophocles, Tacitus, and Thucydides.

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access do not support the suggestion. Most University men of a studious turn spend long hours at school and college in grounding themselves, or being grounded, in the classics; they fill note-books or interleaved texts with collations, references, annotations; and alas! they forget the classics in after life. Ruskin inverted the process. His work in studying the classics was voluminous, but it belongs to later years. At Oxford his study of them was unwilling and little given to the niceties.

The fact is that the University, to which he became deeply attached and to whose service he was to devote a large portion of his best work and energy, played a small and an indecisive part in his own education. The "Graduate of Oxford," as he was to call himself on the title-page of his most famous book, owed to her no revelation, no first awakening. To some of her sons, it is the ineffable charm of Oxford that first gives the call to the pursuit of beauty. But other gardens spread to the moonlight had spoken to Ruskin already; the enchantments of the Middle Age had whispered their message to him from many another city of ancient towers. The University makes an epoch in the lives of others because there the boy becomes the man; but Ruskin was already little of the boy, and at the University he remained under the parental restraints of home. With others, as many biographies tell us, it is at Oxford or Cambridge that "aspiring talent first enters on its inheritance," [1] that young men destined to fill a great place in the world are inspired by congenial studies or honourable emulation to show what is in them and to find their true bent. But to Ruskin the studies of the place were not congenial; he worked, but it was work against the grain; there was nothing in such discipline as he underwent to correct what was defective in his previous education or to develop what was native in his genius; and such emulation as touched him with the spur encouraged him only in a false literary start.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. i. p. 48.

III

A pursuit recognised as proper to the University, to which Ruskin devoted much labour and upon which he wasted much time, was the competition for the Newdigate Prize. He had gone up to the University with the reputation at home of a poet, and his father looked to him to carry off the prize. His Newdigate poems are three in number, for he competed twice unsuccessfully—in 1837 with "The Gipsies," in 1838 with "The Exile of St. Helena"—before being successful in 1839 with "Salsette and Elephanta." "Prize poems," said Tennyson, "are not, properly speaking, 'Poems' at all." They are built much on the same pattern, and Ruskin was not altogether well equipped for the rules of the competition. He meant to succeed, but he scorned the wisdom of the wary in such matters. Among the hints given him by his tutor, on going up to Oxford, was some good advice to competitors for the Newdigate:—

"Then he gave me (wrote Ruskin to his father on Dec. 24, 1836) some directions for gaining Oxford poetical prizes, which were very excellent directions for writing bad poetry. One was to imitate Pope. Now, when I write poetry I like to imitate nobody. However, one piece of counsel was excellent, viz. to write two poems—one in my own style, the other polished and spoiled up to their standard, so that if I failed to carry all before me with my own, I might be able to fall back upon the other."

If Ruskin did not literally carry out this latter counsel, yet a reader, if he cares to compare the several pieces (printed among the Works), will observe that in "Salsette and Elephanta" he polished in the orthodox fashion, whereas in "The Gipsies" he went his own way. In the case of "The Gipsies," Ruskin had a formidable competitor in Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, whom, however, he ran close for the prize. An eminent writer has said that "those who care to see how a clever man may beat a man of genius may compare Dean Stanley's 'Gipsies' with Ruskin's."[1] Stanley's poem

[1] Frederic Harrison's *John Ruskin*, p. 35.

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was undoubtedly better calculated than Ruskin's to hit the taste of the examiners, especially when Keble, as Professor of Poetry, was chief among them. But it seems unnecessary, in order to account for Ruskin's failure, to disparage Stanley's poem, which is among the best of its kind, and contains two or three lines that deserve to live. His "Gipsies" may or may not be the better poem; it is certainly not the better "prize poem." Ruskin's father, whose intense admiration for his son's talents never conquered his own shrewd common sense, put both the philosophy of prize poems and the besetting sin of Ruskin's verses in an admirable letter to W. H. Harrison (April 7, 1837):—

"My son left for Oxford this morning, and had not time to reply to your kind notes. Some corrections he must and others he will, I doubt not, adopt. The truth is, that verses taken at random from his poetic heap are just about as fit for the public eye as a block of marble just starting into form would be for the model room of Somerset House. . . . I cannot get him to correct or revise anything; and if he ever aspires to contend for a Poetry Prize at Oxford, he must fail, for this reason, that there it is not the poem having the greatest number of beauties, but that which betrays fewest faults, that carries the day."

In the following year Ruskin, as a letter to his father shows, took much pains in polishing:—

"I must give an immense time every day to the Newdigate, which I must have, if study will get it. I have much to revise. You find many faults, but there are hundreds which have escaped your notice, and many lines must go out altogether which you and I should wish to stay in. The thing must be remodelled, and I must finish it while it has a freshness on it, otherwise it will not be written well. The old lines are hackneyed in my ears, even as a very soft Orleans plum, which your Jewess has wiped and re-wiped with the corner of her apron, till its polish is perfect, and its temperature elevated."

The poem, however, as finally sent in, was not among Ruskin's happier pieces; he was very properly beaten, as he said, by an old schoolfellow at Mr. Dale's, J. H. Dart,

who afterwards obtained distinction as a conveyancer and wrote a passable translation of the *Iliad*. At the third try Ruskin was successful. His "Salsette and Elephanta"[1] is less interesting than his "Gipsies," but it is far more smooth and polished. It "betrays the fewest faults." Its rhetoric is in the approved style. "You know the kind of thing," said Lord Goschen in describing his own candidature for the Newdigate prize—"rhetoric in rhyme, grand, heroic, antithetical, alliterative." The subject on that occasion was Belshazzar's Feast:—

> "Ho! bring the cups, the golden goblets bring;
> A godlike chalice, for a godlike king!
> Bring forth the cups! 'Twould be a draught divine—
> In Hebrew vessels, Babylonian wine."

There are passages in Ruskin's prize poem which recall Lord Goschen's skit:—

> "Revered as monarchs, or as gods adored,
> Alternately they rear the sceptre and the sword . . .
> And cast, in death-heaps, by the purple flood,
> Her strength of Babylonian multitude."

The argument of the poem conforms closely, too, to the then accepted models, which were parodied by Goldwin Smith in the following programme suggested to a competitor whose subject was "The Stuarts": "The Stuarts will never be restored—The Jews will—Salem!" Stanley's "Gipsies" had concluded with the restoration of all Wanderers to the fold of the Church; and Ruskin's "Salsette and Elephanta," after duly chronicling divers superstitions, shows us heathen India deserting "the darkened path her fathers trod," and seeking redemption in Christianity. The exotic scenery of the poem has been known to perplex some readers. "Majestic

[1] Cases are known, I believe, in which readers have gone through the poem without deriving any clear idea of who or what were Salsette and Elephanta; therein not being worse at fault perhaps than Ruskin himself, who once confessed that he had "waded through 'The Revolt of Islam'" without ever discovering "who revolted against whom, or what." It may be well, therefore, to say at once that Salsette and Elephanta are islands lying off Bombay, with remains of cave temples sacred to Hindu divinities.

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Dharavee," "Canarah's hill," and the "peepul's purple shade" carry with them suggestions of Bon Gaultier's "Kaftan and Kalpac have gone to their rest," and of Edward Lear's "purple nullahs" and "silvery Goreewallahs." But for this the subject was responsible. The piece, however, is not without "beauties" of its own, and the real Ruskin flashes out in occasional passages, as in the lines:—

> "Yes! he shall fall, though once his throne was set
> Where the high heaven and crested mountains met;
> Though distant shone with many an azure gem
> The glacier glory of his diadem."

Ruskin's success with "Salsette and Elephanta" won him favour in the eyes of the College and University authorities. Keble, discharging the usual office of the Professor of Poetry on these occasions, "asked me to cut out all my best bits." Dean Gaisford was gracious, and coached the prizeman for his recitation in the theatre (June 12, 1839). The Censor, in his speech at the end of term, made very complimentary allusions to the honour which a gentleman-commoner had done to the House. The following letter gives a lively account of the speech:—

(*To his Father.*)—"I am in a great hurry, going to Athlone's, but I thought the Censor's speech particularly eloquent last night, and my mother can't remember the substance thereof. After a few remarks on the Class List, he began to speak of a certain *insignis juvenis—ex superiori ordine*—of the upper rank of his college—uniting an intense degree of intellect and morality, who having acquired extensive knowledge of men and manners and natural phenomena during protracted travel—uniting refined taste with extensive knowledge of polite literature—*summo* something or other—and then *maxima facundiâ atque lepore*, etc.—had been successful in *certamine poetico—victoriam meritam*, etc.—to the great joy of his college friends and tutors. Then he proceeded to compare this Juvenis to Alexander the Great and Pompey, though I couldn't catch the points of resemblance, and wound up by returning thanks to him in the name of his college, and saying they expected higher honour from him yet. All this in

Latin, and a great deal more which I could not hear. I want a brown, rough, bright-eyed brute of a new dog." CHAP. III.

The recitation of the Prize Poem at Commemoration was a great event in the domestic circle. His mother was too nervous to be present; but without need, for Ruskin went through the ordeal very well, to his father's infinite delight. The recitation was of accidental interest as bringing the young author to the notice of a master in literature, in whose spirit of "walking with nature" Ruskin was to undertake his principal work. "There were 2000 ladies and gentlemen to hear it," records Ruskin's father proudly in a letter to W. H. Harrison; "he was not at all nervous, and it went all very well off. The notice taken of him is quite extraordinary." It must be doubted, however, whether the Newdigate Prize Poem was so much the attraction as the conferment of an honorary degree upon the Lake Poet. Wordsworth's reception on the occasion by the undergraduates was most enthusiastic. He in his turn took kindly notice of the young prize poet. "We were asked," continues Ruskin's father, "to meet Wordsworth yesterday, and getting next to him, I had a delightful hour." Ruskin's Newdigate was almost worth winning, for the sake of this link in the personal history of English literature; but in after life he looked back with bitterness on the long hours spent upon the competition. The recitation, he said in conversation in 1881, quite turned his head; and in some unused notes for his Autobiography he describes the prize as having been won at last "to my father's tearful joy, and my own entirely ridiculous and ineffable conceit and puffing up. We went on our summer travels that year to Cornwall, where I expected the miners to regard me with admiration as the winner of the Newdigate—where, however, I still had the grace and sense to spend all the time I could get, after my miserable forenoon's task of Lucretius was done, in staring at the sea. I cannot understand how schoolmasters of sense allow their boys even to try for prizes." Many passages in his books, in which he inveighed against the evils of the competitive element in education, were heightened in emphasis by bitter recollections of his own experience.

IV

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Ruskin spoke occasionally at the Union, and served for a term upon the Committee of that Society. The President under whom he served was Lake, afterwards Dean of Durham, who never forgot two very brilliant speeches he heard there at different times. One was by Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards Marquis of Salisbury and Prime Minister; the other, "striking and very poetical," was by Ruskin. "I forget the subject," added the Dean, "but remember a specially vivid description of the scenery of the Alps."[1] The subject of the motion which Ruskin proposed in this speech, as in many a book of later years, was "That intellectual education as distinguished from moral discipline is detrimental to the interests of the lower order of a nation." The connexion with the scenery of the Alps is not obvious, but Ruskin may have kept no closer to his text in Union speeches than afterwards in Professorial lectures. Another motion which he supported was "That the reading of good and well-written Novels is neither prejudicial to the moral nor to the intellectual character." For that debate he must have been well prepared by the essay of which we have already heard. Ruskin throughout his life was fond of the theatre, and it is interesting to find him moving on another occasion "That Theatrical Representations are upon the whole highly beneficial to the character of a nation." Of his reply at the end of the debate there is amusing mention in the life of F. W. Robertson. The future minister of Trinity Chapel, Brighton, spoke against the theatre, and was so much obsessed with the responsibility of the occasion that, before rising, he asked the friend who was sitting at his side to pray for him. The prayer did not avail to save him from a reply which convulsed the room with laughter. Ruskin's speech, as the friend records, was "very ingenious and somewhat sarcastic. With considerable circumlocution and innuendo he was describing a certain personage to whose influence he probably thought Robertson had, in his

[1] *Memorials of Dean Lake*, 1901, p. 33.

observations, given too much consideration, when Robertson said in my ear, 'Why, the man is describing the Devil!'"[1] One other speech at the Union remains to be recorded; it is the only one of the four in which Ruskin took a side which was afterwards not to be his. It had been moved "That the present facilities of acquiring knowledge through the medium of the Press are on the whole productive of more harm than benefit," and Ruskin spoke against the motion; in favour of a Press which he afterwards compendiously condemned as so many "square leagues of dirtily-printed falsehood."[2] But, as for personal reasons I am glad to remember, he made exceptions.

V

Neither in Christ Church, nor in the wider circle to which membership of the Union might have admitted him, did Ruskin make many fast friendships. With the Oriel set, then the most influential in the University, he did not come in contact. Froude was his contemporary at Oxford, and in after life they became close friends, but they did not meet in their undergraduate days. Of the Oxford Movement, at its height towards the end of Ruskin's time there, little mention is to be found in his letters, writings, or papers. Two of the greatest masters of modern English were at the University at the same time; but their orbits did not cross. Who can say what might have happened if Ruskin had fallen under Newman's spell? But the younger man had a stubborn tenacity of Evangelical breeding in him. His mother, however, was not without her anxieties, for was not Pusey installed in a chair of authority within her son's college?—

"I am sorry, very sorry," she wrote to him, when he was staying at Oxford in 1843, "that such differences should have arisen anywhere, but more especially that they should have arisen in Oxford. What are the real doctrines of Puseyism? Why do they not state them fairly and in such plain terms as may

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, by Stopford Brooke, p. 18.

[2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 67.

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enable people of ordinary understandings to know what they do think the truth? Any time I have heard Mr. Newman preach, he seemed to me like Oliver Cromwell to talk that he might not be understood. . . . Surely our Saviour's consecration must have effected a change in the Elements if an ordinary minister can; but these are things too much for me. I thank God I have His word to go to; and I beseech you to take nothing for granted that you hear from these people, but think and search for yourself. As I have said, I have little fear of you, but I shall be glad when you get from among them."

This was an attitude of suspicion towards his Oxford associates, as towards Carlyle and others at a later time, which she steadily maintained, and it caused some necessary alienation of sympathy and economy of confidence between mother and son. Such an attitude, and Ruskin's dutiful habit of spending some part of every evening in his mother's lodgings, may well have tended to limit the range of his acquaintance. But there were other reasons. For one thing, he was, as we have seen, centred and absorbed in his own pursuits; for another, he had, at this period at any rate and in relation to his own sex, little genius for friendship in the romantic sort. Of some of his Christ Church contemporaries he saw something during vacations, and for a time his father took rooms for him in St. James's Street, that his friends of quality might not be at the pains of coming out to Herne Hill to see him. References to Christ Church acquaintances occur in a series of his *Letters to a College Friend*. Edward Clayton, to whom they are addressed, was his senior at Christ Church by two years, and was ordained in 1841. In writing to him, Ruskin adopts the familiar style common among college friends, and condescends to the occasional use of slang. Many of the letters seem, however, to have been written with care, and there is much vivacity and fancy in them. Of the following Reflections on a Penny, it has been well said that there is "at least a dash of Charles Lamb in it":—

(*To* Edward Clayton.) *July* 4, 1840.—"Sir,—It is altogether impossible that you can have any moral perception of the value

of coins in general, and pence in particular—that you can have formed any distinct ideas of the functions of pence—of their design—and influence on society. You never can have weighed one in your hand—suspended it between your forefinger and thumb—felt that it was an ounce of copper—remembered that it was four farthings—or computed that eleven encores would make it a shilling! a Scotch pound! a piece of silver! a bob! Have you ever reflected that, in order to your possession of it, currents of silent lightning have been rushing through the inmost mass of the globe since the foundation of its hills was laid—that chasms have been cloven upwards through its adamant, with the restless electric fire gleaming along their crystalline sides, folded in purple clouds of metallic vapour—that to obtain it for you the sepulchral labour of a thousand arms has penetrated the recesses of the earth, dashed the river from its path, hurled the rock from its seat, sought a way beneath the waves of the deep, heavy sea! For you, night and day, have heaved the dark limbs of the colossal engine—its deep, fierce breath has risen in hot pants to heaven—the crimson furnace has illumined midnight, shaken its fiery hair like meteors among the stars—for you—for you, to abuse and waste the result of their ceaseless labour! . . .

"I have been hard at work with Cocks,[1] getting him to believe in Turner: he is coming steadily round; clever fellow! will soon be all right. He is going up the Nile this winter, to learn to eat raw meat; he'll save in cooks when he comes back, provided they don't cook *him*. I have seen Newton in town, who is busy giving long names to brass farthings, and putting them in the British Museum. Acland, I had a day's sketching with, at Oxford, and was introduced to Athlone's *fourteen* dogs:[2] he is beginning to think of parting with some. Nothing new at Oxford, except a Christ Church man's making the Proctor feel the value of *pence* by taking him 480 half-pence by way of a sovereign fine, and remarking to him, as he let go the handkerchief which contained them, that he'd no doubt he would find them all right, if he'd pick them up. This was done once before, but, by all accounts, not so effectively."

[1] Charles Somers Cocks, afterwards third Earl Somers.

[2] George Henry Godart de Ginkel, Earl of Athlone, an undergraduate at Christ Church at this time; he died in 1843.

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It was, however, among the "last year" undergraduates and the College authorities that Ruskin found his more valuable friends and acquaintances. Some of the great personages of the place disappointed him æsthetically, and either took no notice of him or were personally repellent. The Dean (Gaisford) was "a rotundly progressive terror, or sternly enthroned and niched Anathema." Pusey, who never spoke to him, was "a sickly and rather ill put together English clerical gentleman, who never looked one in the face, or appeared aware of the state of the weather." Liddell, on the other hand, who succeeded to the Deanery in 1855, impressed Ruskin at once as "one of the rarest types of nobly presenced Englishmen." "He was always right and serviceable," Ruskin adds in some autobiographical notes, "in what notice he took of me, though he took little, and his haughty and reserved manner hindered me from asking for more." To his advice, however, Ruskin owed a debt at this time which was acknowledged in one of his last lectures at Oxford.[1] The Library of Christ Church contains a few good Italian pictures and a valuable collection of drawings. Liddell introduced Ruskin to them, and in the later period of his undergraduate days he spent many hours studying and drawing among them. The description of Liddell in *Præterita* is well known, and is not very sympathetic. With him and his family, in later years, Ruskin was, however, in relations of cordial friendship, and there are letters which show that he and the Dean were on more affectionate terms in earlier times than the references in *Præterita* suggest. Ruskin's own College Tutor was the Rev. Walter Brown, afterwards Vicar of Wendlebury, who "became," says the pupil, "somewhat loved by me, and with gentleness encouraged me into some small acquaintance with Greek verbs." "He was the only one of my old masters," wrote Ruskin in a letter of condolence on his death (1862), "from whom I could or would receive guidance." The guidance, if received, was accompanied with much objection and criticism on Ruskin's side, as appears in many letters which passed between them on principles of criticism, theories of education, and the

[1] A Lecture on "Patience" (1884), § 6.

foundations of morality and religion. Ruskin perhaps owed more to his private tutor, Osborne Gordon, who, if less given to discussion of the immensities, was ever at hand with a shrewd word in season. Ruskin's father was deeply sensible of Gordon's services to his son, and in recognition of them gave £5000 for the augmentation of poor Christ Church livings. Ruskin's own tribute may be read in the inscription which he composed for a memorial window in Easthampstead Church:—

This Window and Mosaic Pavement are dedicate
To God's praise, in loving Memory of His
Servant, Osborne Gordon, B.D.,
Student and Censor of Christ Church, Oxford,
Rector of this Parish from 1860 to 1883.
An Englishman of the olden time,
Humane without weakness, Learned without ostentation,
Witty without malice, Wise without pride,
Honest of heart, Lofty of thought;
Dear to his fellow men, and dutiful to his God.
When his friends shall also be departed,
And can no more cherish his memory,
Be it revered by the stranger.

Another of the College authorities to whom Ruskin owed much was Dr. Buckland, afterwards Dean of Westminster, then a Canon of Christ Church and Reader in Geology in the University. He was one of the "characters" of the place; his table, for one thing, was like no one else's, before or since. He used to say that he had eaten his way straight through the animal creation, and that the worst thing was a mole; though he told Lady Lyndhurst afterwards that there was one thing even worse than a mole, and that was a blue-bottle fly. Augustus Hare, whose amusing tales themselves call for a somewhat robust digestion, had a story of a dish yet more strange and rare. The heart of a French king preserved in a silver casket at Nuneham was produced for his inspection. Whilst looking at it he exclaimed, "I have eaten many strange things, but have never eaten the heart of a king," and before any one could hinder him he had gobbled

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it up, and the precious relic was lost for ever! Ruskin always regretted a day of unlucky engagement on which he missed a delicate toast of mice; and remembered, with delight, being waited upon one hot summer morning by two graceful and polite little Carolina lizards, who kept off the flies. He recalled this occasion in the Catalogue of his collections at Oxford in a note to his copy of Carpaccio's signature held by a lizard. "The student will be surprised at first," he says, "by the placing of this example in the group of domestic animals. If he will recollect Juvenal's measure of contented possession—*Unius sese dominum fecisse lacertæ*—he may feel that the lizard is indeed the best of all introductions to the races of living creatures meant for our companions." He had another story of Buckland sending a young lady to a ball with a live snake for her bracelet, and he stayed there! "Yes," added Ruskin, in telling the story to a young lady, "and well he might in such an honourable place; any snake might be proud of so delightful a position." At Buckland's table Ruskin met the leading scientific men of the day; among others, the one who was to become the greatest of them all:—

(*To his Father.*) "OXFORD, *April* 22, 1837. . . . Buckland introduced me to Lord Cole, and said that as we were both geologists he did not hesitate to leave us together, while he did what he certainly very much required—brushed up a little. Lord Cole and I were talking about some fossils newly arrived from India. He remarked that his friend Dr. B.'s room was cleaner and in better order than he remembered ever to have seen it. There was not a chair to sit upon, all covered with dust, broken alabaster candlesticks, withered flower-leaves, frogs cut out of serpentine, broken models of fallen temples, torn papers, old manuscripts, stuffed reptiles, deal boxes, brown paper, wool, tow and cotton, and a considerable variety of other articles. . . . While we were sitting over our wine after dinner, in came Dr. Daubeny, one of the most celebrated geologists of the day,—a curious little animal, looking through his spectacles with an air very *distingué*—and Mr. Darwin, whom I had heard read a paper at the Geological Society. He and I got together, and talked all the evening."

Ruskin used to prepare diagrams for the lectures given by Buckland as Reader in Geology. "My picture of the granite veins in Trewavas Head, with a cutter weathering the point in a squall, in the style of Copley Fielding, still, I believe, forms part of the resources of the geological department." Buckland's geology was in many respects as old-fashioned as this curious relic; but Ruskin always remembered with gratitude his introduction, through Buckland's advice, to James Forbes's papers on glacier motion, afterwards expanded in *Travels through the Alps of Savoy*.

An interesting friendship which Ruskin made among the older men was with Charles Newton. He was three years Ruskin's senior, and was already giving evidence of his bent, in the scientific study of architecture and archæology. Ruskin owed to him one lesson, he says, which he never forgot. It came about in the usual way, which was a request to Ruskin for a drawing. Newton wanted one of a Norman door on which he was going to read a paper to the Architectural Society:—

> "When I got to work on it, he had to point out to me that my black dots and Proutesque breaks were no manner of use to him, and that I must be content to draw steady lines in their exact place and proportion. I fulfilled his directions with more difficulty than I had expected—and produced the first architectural drawing of any value I ever made in my life. If only I had gone on so! but the accuracy was irksome to me;—the result I thought cold and commonplace. I went back to my dots and breaks for three years more. Yet the lesson stayed with me."

The two men had many tastes in common; they travelled together in Switzerland and Italy, as we shall hear; and "there were possibilities," Ruskin says, "of some heroic attachment between us, in the manner of Theseus and Pirithous." "Newton is indeed a noble fellow," wrote Ruskin in 1850; "I learn more from him than from any other of my acquaintance old and young, besides getting prime jokes into the bargain." But when Ruskin dilated upon the beauty of the snows of Chamouni, Newton fixed his eyes upon the moraines and was of opinion that "more housemaids were

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wanted in that establishment." The note of Philistinism was assumed, no doubt, to tease his friend; but there was some fundamental difference between the two men. Ruskin was in his early years absorbed in landscape, Italian art, Gothic architecture, and was destined to develop Radical tendencies which Newton had early detected when he said of his friend that there was "the making of a Robespierre in him." Newton was absorbed in classical art and archæology; was Attic and diplomatic. On one occasion he invited Ruskin to go with him to Greece, but this invitation was not accepted. The Goth and the Greek went their several ways, and a friendship which at one time was close and affectionate was partly buried beneath the marbles of Halicarnassus. Yet as late as 1869 Ruskin refers to Newton as "a sure and unweariedly kind guide, always near me since we were at College together."[1] The nearness came to have a domestic tie, for Newton married Mr. Arthur Severn's eldest sister; and one may trace to the friendship with Newton the lively interest which Ruskin took in archæological excavation in classical lands, and the financial aids which he rendered to it.[2]

But the closest, the dearest, and the most enduring of Ruskin's Oxford friendships — a friendship which never changed, but by deepening, throughout life — was with Henry Acland. He was Ruskin's senior by four years in age, by two in College standing, and the older man assumed from the first an attitude of protective friendship towards the younger. Ruskin has drawn in *Præterita* a charming picture of Acland "in the playful and proud heroism of his youth," and has described how he "gave me the good of seeing a noble young English life in its purity, sagacity, honour, reckless daring, and happy piety; its English pride shining prettily through all, like a girl's in her beauty." Ruskin admired, without having it in him to imitate, the example. "I had been too often adjured and commanded," he says, "to take care of myself, ever to think of following

[1] Preface to *The Queen of the Air*.

[2] He defrayed the cost of various excavations in Rhodes, and the works of art discovered were presented by him to the Museum.

him over slippery weirs, or accompanying him in pilot boats through white-topped shoal water; but both in art and science, he could pull me on, being years ahead of me, yet glad of my sympathy, for, till I came, he was literally alone in the University in caring for either." The protective friendship, on the one side, the affectionate sympathy, on the other, endured throughout life. Acland, in looking back over more than fifty years of "a friendship without a jar," said that Ruskin had been one of the joys of his life and of his home;[1] and Ruskin, in one of his later Oxford lectures, said of the friendship begun in undergraduate days that "if it alone were all I owed to Oxford, the most gracious kindness of the Alma Mater would in that gift have been fulfilled to me."[2]

VI

"And is there to be no more Oxford?" asked Froude, after reading the account of Ruskin's undergraduate days in *Præterita*—an account which, with inimitable irony and humour, describes "Christ Church Choir," but which—so Froude, of Oriel, complained—did not give an exhaustive view either of the studies or manners of the University in their day. "No, dear friend," replied Ruskin; "I have no space to describe the advantages I never used, nor does my own failure give me right to blame, even were there any use in blaming, a system now passed away." He was not always so reticent; a letter written many years earlier to his Oxford tutor gives account of what he did not learn at the University, and what he should have been taught:—

(*To the* Rev. W. L. Brown.) "Edinburgh, 8*th November*, 1853. . . . The very few who have *perfectly* rational parents, and perfectly well educated minds, may turn our university system to good advantage, but *they* would do the same with anything. I will tell you frankly what I feel respecting myself. . . . I went on till I was to go to College, *educating myself* in mineralogy,

[1] Letter from Acland, read at the opening of the Ruskin Museum at Meersbrook Park (*Igdrasil*, May 1890).

[2] *Readings in "Modern Painters,"* § 64.

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drawing, and the power of stringing words together, which I called poetry. My intense vanity prevented my receiving any education in literature, except what I picked up myself. . . . On the whole, I am conscious of no result from the University in this respect, except the dead waste of three or four months in writing poems for the Newdigate, a prize which I would unhesitatingly do away with. . . .

"I ought never to have been allowed—but stop: I will tell you exactly what ought to have been done with me—had the University been working on a healthy system.

"I should have been first asked what I liked and had been in the habit of studying. I should have answered—Mineralogy, natural history, drawing, poetry, and mathematics: that I *rather* liked Greek.

"'Good,' you should have answered. 'Show me your poetry; write me a prose essay on any subject that at present interests you. Go to Dr. Buckland and ascertain how much time he can spare you, and to Dr. Daubeny and Mr. Hill. Let them examine you first closely, and ascertain where you ought to begin.'

"When I gave you my poetry and essay, you would have seen in a moment that the poetry was uninventive and valueless, but that the prose writing had some thought in it, and that the talent of putting words together was worth cultivating. You should then have consulted with Buckland, Daubeny, and Hill, and on their report, have addressed me next day as follows:—

"'Sir, you will not, of course, expect that our estimate of your powers and of what is best to be done for you should *altogether* agree with yours—but if we are wrong, you will have plenty of time to show us that we are so, in your after life; meantime, we hope for your diligence in following out the plan of study we shall adopt for you. We think that your prose writing is good. You will furnish us with a short essay every week, on which we will make such remarks as we think proper. *We do not expect you to follow our advice, unless you see the justice of it. Every writer, however young, must form* his own style by his own judgment.

"'We do not think it advisable at present to cultivate your taste for poetry, and we beg of you to give us your word of

honour that you will not occupy your time in writing so much as a single verse while you are at the University. This is the only thing in which we wish to put constraint upon you.

"(You would not have hurt my vanity very dreadfully by this, and have saved me much loss of time.)

"'We will give you every advantage in our power in the study of mineralogy, botany, and astronomy, but as we find you are unacquainted at present with the first laws of chemistry, you must begin with these.

"'You will find it not irksome to give an hour a day to the study of Latin grammar—an hour to Greek: and an hour—or as much more as you like—to Mathematics.

"'In all your studies, we have only one request to make you, and that we expect you scrupulously to comply with: That you work with *patience* as well as diligence, and take care to secure every step you take: we do not care how much or how little you do—but let what you do, *be done for ever*.' . . .

"With another boy, of course, another kind of treatment would have been required. You will say, 'But this would have needed totally different machinery.' Yes, verily, and totally different machinery I trust we shall soon have. They have too long forgotten at Oxford the exclamation of the old cavalier—'By G—, sir, men cannot be stuffed as they stuff turkies'—when his friend sent to him in his prison to ask what he could do for him before his execution."

This is all very well; and in these days, of wider choice of studies and of "soft options" (as admirers of the *ancien régime* are wont to call them), it is possible that Ruskin might have fared better at Oxford. But on the other hand he might not. He would have been wayward and discursive, I think, whatever the University system of the time might have been. At the end, however, as the hour of the final schools drew near, he made a desperate effort to qualify himself for the brilliant degree upon which his father counted as the first stage on his son's career towards a Bishopric. In the Long Vacation of 1839, Osborne Gordon came to read with Ruskin at Herne Hill. He gave one initial piece of good advice which his pupil throughout

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life consistently disobeyed: "When you have got too much to do, don't do it." After Christmas came the last push, with private coaching again from Gordon, and Ruskin read, with little intermission, from six in the morning to twelve at night. One evening at the beginning of the summer term he was surprised by a short tickling cough, followed by a curious taste in the mouth which he presently perceived to be blood. The drop was not his death-warrant, but it was a death-blow to hopes of academical distinction. Some of the doctors took a very serious view; his mother, who had kept terms in Oxford in order to be at hand in case of accident or sudden illness, was more hopeful; but on the immediate policy for the crisis there could be no division of opinion. Further reading was imperatively forbidden. The Dean gave permission to put off degree-taking; Ruskin went down from Oxford with his parents in search of health. He was to return two years later; and, a year later again, was to come before the world as "A Graduate of Oxford"; but it was among other scenes and in other studies, among the hills and clouds, the trees and mosses, that he really graduated.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETRY OF ARCHITECTURE—POEMS—FIRST LOVE

(1837–1840)

> "I spent the sunny hours of many a glorious morning,—when I ought to have been hammering on the hilltops or ploughing in the fields,—in trying which of two fine words would fit best at the end of a stanza, and how the stanza might best be twisted so as to get them both in—sustaining my stomach for this work at the same time by dwelling on my own disappointed love and on any picturesque horrors or sorrows I could find in Herodotus."—AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

NOTHING illustrates more clearly the strength of Ruskin's native bent, and the early development of his powers, than the papers on "The Poetry of Architecture," which appeared in Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* during 1837 and 1838; that is, when he was eighteen and nineteen. In 1837 the summer tour with his parents was to Yorkshire, the Lakes, and Derbyshire. They drove down by the North Road as usual, and on the fourth day arrived at Catterick Bridge, on the Swale, below Richmond. By the clear-pebbled stream, Ruskin felt for the last time, he says, "the pure childish love of nature which Wordsworth so idly takes for an intimation of immortality." They went on to the Lake country; familiar ground, but since he had last visited it he had seen Italy. The contrast between the cottages of Westmoreland and those of the Southern Alps struck him at once, and the idea of the architectural papers took shape. Some were written in 1837; others, in the following year when the tour was to Scotland, and again the Lakes and Derbyshire. The first notes were written on his knee as they trotted along; they were worked up at Oxford, and many of them were dated at "Christ Church."

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How significant is the full title of these papers!—

> *Introduction to the Poetry of Architecture; or, The Architecture of the Nations of Europe considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character*, by Kataphusin.

"I could not have put," he says, "in fewer or more inclusive words the definition of what half my future life was to be spent in discoursing of; while the nom-de-plume I chose, According to Nature, was equally expressive of the temper in which I was to discourse alike on that and every other subject." His works on architecture were the first treatises in English to teach the significance of buildings as records of the life and faith of nations. Herein they had a truly scientific basis, and opened up new paths of speculation, study, and research. In these early essays, the thesis is illustrated from a narrow range of instances and in a restricted field, for the wide prospectus of the title shrank in the actual text to an analysis of cottages and villas in England and the Alpine regions, with an excursus in which the writer characteristically found sermons in Chimneys; but the root-idea is firmly there: in every chapter the characteristics of the building are brought into relation with the national character of the builders. The papers show, moreover, that Ruskin had already seized some of the architectural principles which he was to develop ten years later in *The Seven Lamps*. Here, for instance, is a passage (notable also for its command of expression) in which he states his characteristic theory of ornament:—

"When Nature determines on decorating a piece of projecting rock, she begins with the bold projecting surface, to which the eye is naturally drawn by its form, and (observe how closely she works by the principles which were before investigated) she finishes this with lichens and mingled colours, to a degree of delicacy, which makes us feel that we never can look close enough; but she puts in not a single mass of form to attract the

eye, more than the grand outline renders necessary. But, where the rock joins the ground, where the shadow falls, and the eye is not attracted, she puts in bold forms of ornament, large leaves and grass, bunches of moss and heather, strong in their projection, and deep in their colour. Therefore, the architect must act on precisely the same principle: his outward surfaces he may leave the wind and weather to finish in their own way; but he cannot allow Nature to put grass and weeds into the shadows; *ergo*, he must do it himself; and, whenever the eye loses itself in shade, wherever there is a dark and sharp corner, there, if he can, he should introduce a wreath of flower-work."

And here, again, is a passage in which the boy of nineteen lays down a law with regard to ornamental design and natural forms which he was to teach in lectures, treatises, examples, and practice throughout his working life:—

"Of the ornament itself, it is to be observed that it is not to be what is properly called architectural *decoration* (that which is 'decorous,' becoming, or suitable to), namely, the combination of minor forms, which repeat the lines, and partake of the essence of the grand design, and carry out its meaning and life into its every member; but it is to be true sculpture; the presenting of a pure ideality of form to the eye, which may give perfect conception, without the assistance of colour: it is to be the stone image of vegetation, not botanically accurate, indeed, but sufficiently near to permit us to be sure of the intended flower or leaf."

As the "Reply to *Blackwood*," written in 1836, was the prelude to *Modern Painters*, so the "Poetry of Architecture" was the prelude to *Seven Lamps*, *Stones of Venice*, and *The Two Paths*.[1]

The individuality of style in these papers is no less marked. The sentences are put together in his characteristic manner, with the form and the rhythm which were his own. The *juvenilia* of many eminent men, if brought together, may often be mistaken, the one for the other's;

[1] Any reader who cares to pursue this subject will find in the Notes, and by the Index, to the Library Edition a large collection of parallel passages.

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but who could doubt that a passage such as this was Ruskin's?—

"But, if one principal character of the Italian landscape is melancholy, another is elevation. . . . Tall mulberry trees, with festoons of the luxuriant vine, purple with ponderous clusters, trailed and trellised between and over them, shade the wide fields of stately Indian corn; luxuriance of lofty vegetation (catalpa, and aloe, and olive) ranging itself in lines of massy light along the wan champaign, guides the eye away to the unfailing wall of mountain, Alp or Apennine; no cold long range of shivery grey, but dazzling light of snow, or undulating breadth of blue, fainter and darker, in infinite variety; peak, precipice, and promontory passing away into the wooded hills, each with its tower or white village sloping into the plain; castellated battlements cresting their undulations; some wide majestic river gliding along the champaign, the bridge on its breast and the city on its shore; the whole canopied with cloudless azure, basking in mistless sunshine, breathing the silence of odoriferous air."

This might easily be taken for a passage from *Modern Painters;* and another of Ruskin's characteristic notes, the satiric, is no less clearly struck:—

"All unity of feeling (which is the first principle of good taste) is neglected; we see nothing but incongruous combination; we have pinnacles without height, windows without light, columns with nothing to sustain, and buttresses with nothing to support. We have parish paupers smoking their pipes and drinking their beer under Gothic arches and sculptured niches; and quiet old English gentlemen reclining on crocodile stools and peeping out of the windows of Swiss chalets."

Very nearly the whole of Ruskin (in his *Modern Painters* period) is in these early essays—in embryo, in miniature.

The essays show, as Ruskin said in his autobiographical notes, that he had already quite definitely taken his own manner of writing: "a carelessly connected throwing out of thoughts as they came into my head, modulating the sentence in any time or rhythm that suited them, and

only, when I began to lose breath, finishing it off with a neatly tied knot or melodious flourish." This is true, but there are passages also in them which suggest a model:—

> "It will be seen hereafter, when we leave the lowly valley for the torn ravine, and the grassy knoll for the ribbed precipice, that, if the Continental architects cannot adorn the pasture with the humble roof, they can crest the crag with eternal battlements; if they cannot minister to a landscape's peace, they can add to its terror," etc.

In passages such as this we are reminded of the calculated periods of Johnson. And this influence was at the time strong upon Ruskin. The books which his father took as companions of travel were four little volumes of Johnson; "and accordingly," says Ruskin, "in spare hours and on wet days, the turns and returns of re-iterated *Rambler* and iterated *Idler* fastened themselves in my ears and mind." And fastened themselves, he added, to his lasting advantage. "I at once and for ever recognised in him a man entirely sincere, and infallibly wise in the view and estimate he gave of the common questions, business, and ways of the world. No other writer could have secured me, as he did, against all chance of being misled by my own sanguine and metaphysical temperament."

The papers on "The Poetry of Architecture," which were illustrated by rough woodcuts after drawings by Ruskin, attracted considerable attention. We have heard how Mr. Sopwith, the engineer, considered himself highly privileged in making the author's acquaintance at Oxford; and the *Times*, in reviewing a file of Loudon's serials, singled out the articles as "the most remarkable in the Magazine." "Kataphusin has the mind of a poet as well as the eye and hand of an artist, and has produced a series of highly poetical essays" (Feb. 2, 1839). This I believe to be the first notice of any prose piece by Ruskin that appeared in the press. Loudon, whose appreciation of the papers has been recorded above, invited Ruskin to write on other subjects; and indeed it seems that no discussion started in the Magazine was considered complete without a contribution

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from Kataphusin. This was a view of such cases which at no time of his life was Ruskin disinclined to take. The same *Architectural Magazine* contains in its issues for 1838 a long series of papers by him on "The Convergence of Perpendiculars." These are interesting as showing his interest in geometrical problems and his skill in controversy. They fill a place, too, among his *juvenilia* as foreshadowing another work of his later life—*The Elements of Perspective* (1859). But indeed, as some one has said, there are few artistic or artistic-scientific problems that Ruskin has not somewhere or other handled. And to this same early period belongs an ingenious essay—to be found, of all places in the world, in a book on Landscape Gardening[1]—upon "The Proper Shapes of Pictures and Engravings." Incidentally Ruskin asserts a principle which has been much emphasised by modern art-critics:—

"When an artist is *composing* his picture, he supposes the distribution of sight, which may be called, for convenience, the attention of the eye, to be perfect; and considers only that indistinct and undetailed proportion of forms and colours, which is best obtained from the finished drawing by half closing, and thus throwing a dimness over the eye. But, in *finishing*, he works on quite a different principle. One locality is selected by him, as chiefly worthy of the eye's attention; to that locality he directs it almost exclusively, supposing only such partial distribution of sight over the rest of the drawing, as may obtain a vague idea of the tones and forms which set off and relieve the leading feature. Accordingly, as he recedes from this locality, his tones become fainter, his drawing more undecided, his lights less defined, in order that the spectator may not find any point disputing for authority with the leading idea."

This is by no means the only passage in Ruskin's writings wherein he anticipated the theory of impressionism. Another essay, printed during his undergraduate days, is entitled *Whether Works of Art may, with propriety, be com-*

[1] *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the late Humphry Repton*, a new edition by J. C. Loudon, 1840. Ruskin's contribution is dated "Oxford, February 1839."

bined with the Sublimity of Nature; and what would be the most appropriate situation for the Proposed Monument to the Memory of Sir Walter Scott, in Edinburgh? This question was exciting much controversy in the press; something that "Kataphusin" had said in *The Poetry of Architecture* was cited as supporting somebody's proposal, and a deliverance was sought from the great man himself. Ruskin sat down in his rooms at Christ Church, and despatched an elaborate essay forthwith; diverting himself, gladly enough, we need not doubt, from his Aristotle, but dividing this subject also into categories and deducing conclusions "from demonstrable principles." The demonstration did not convince the Committee, for Ruskin proposed a colossal statue on Salisbury Crags, whereas the Scott monument ultimately took the form of what he afterwards called "a small vulgar Gothic steeple"[1] in Princes Street.

II

These prose pieces are remarkable for their command of the medium which Ruskin was ultimately to adopt. But they were little more than bye-work. It was into verse, apart from and beyond the Newdigate competitions, that he threw the greater part of his literary activity at Oxford. He continued so to do for some years; and even after he had published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, he still devoted serious thought to poetical composition. Before he achieved true fame as a writer of prose, he had made a false start as a poet. He described in later years how some of his pieces "made my unwise friends radiantly happy in the thought that I should certainly be a poet, and as exquisitely miserable at the first praises of then clear-dawning Tennyson."[2] The judicious reader, who neither allows himself to read into Ruskin's verse a glamour from his prose, nor to be blinded by the greater merits of the prose to any merits in the verse, will probably sympathise

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 31.

[2] *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. v. (added in 1877) § 2.

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a little with the hopes, while entirely applauding his ultimate choice. His real strength lay in other directions; but if at all times he missed being a poet, he sometimes missed it only by a hair's breadth. Yet in verse it is just the hair's breadth that makes all the difference. No one ever marked out the dividing line more trenchantly than Ruskin himself. In all the arts, he said, the difference between the "all but" finest and "finest" is infinite;[1] and "with second-rate poetry *in quality* no one ought to be allowed to trouble mankind."[2] Ruskin came to regard his own poetic career, most clearly and decisively, as a false start; but it is among the curiosities of literary history that he took so long to discover the fact.

"My son," wrote his father to W. H. Harrison from Venice (May 25, 1846), "has not written a line of poetry, . . . he only regrets ever having written any. He thinks all his own poetry very worthless, and considers it unfortunate that he prematurely worked any small mine of poetry he might possess. He seems to think the mine is exhausted, and neither gold nor silver given to the world." Ruskin was drawn into working the mine by his own precocious facility, by the chances of literary introduction, by the encouragement of his father, by a certain success in hitting the taste of the time, and by the inspiration of first love. His precocious facility and his father's encouragement of it have been described in an earlier chapter. The chance which opened the way into print for his youthful verses came about in this way:—Through a cousin, who was a clerk in the house of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., he was introduced to Thomas Pringle, the Scottish poet, at that time editor of *Friendship's Offering*, a fashionable Annual published by the firm. Pringle was struck by the young Ruskin's gifts, and printed some of his pieces in the Annual for 1835, issued in the preceding autumn. Pringle did the boy a further favour and, "as a sacred Eleusinian initiation and Delphic pilgrimage," took him one day to see the poet Rogers. The initiate, admitted to the Presence, betrayed

[1] *Cestus of Aglaia*, § 28.

[2] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xii. § 6 *n*.

inopportune zeal for Turner and the Old Masters. He congratulated the great man with enthusiasm on the beauty of the engravings by which the *Italy* was illustrated; and when Pringle abruptly diverted the conversation, the boy allowed his eyes to wander frankly to the Titians on the crimson-silken walls. He was soon to know better, and his letters to the poet, of a few years later, show him an adept in the art of pleasant flattery. Pringle was succeeded in the editorship of *Friendship's Offering* by William Henry Harrison. Of this worthy man, Ruskin wrote a memoir entitled "My First Editor." He was a clerk in an Insurance Office, and a city friend of Ruskin's father. Though not an author himself, except in a very mild way, Harrison lived near the rose. As editor of *Friendship's Offering* and Registrar of the Royal Literary Fund he came across many distinguished men in whose reflected radiance he sunned himself with modest joy. He was a great admirer of Ruskin's talent, and during the years of his editorship of the annual (1837–41) had a first call on all the young man's poems. Ruskin's connexion with *Friendship's Offering* continued after Harrison ceased to edit it; and his contributions were also sought for in other publications of the kind—such as *The Amaranth*, edited by T. K. Hervey, and *The Keepsake* and *The Book of Beauty*, both edited by Lady Blessington. Indeed, no miscellany for the boudoir was considered complete without a copy of verses from "J. R." of "Christ Church, Oxford"; and the reviewers seldom failed to pick out his contributions for quotation and praise. It is a curiosity of criticism that papers which ignored or derided *Modern Painters* were enthusiastic over Ruskin's early poems. The *Times* had no notice of the prose masterpiece, but found "real merit" in the Album verses. The *Athenæum*, which fell savagely upon *Modern Painters*, saw in the verses coinage "from the true mint." The *Literary Gazette* discovered in Ruskin the poet "all the force and spirit of a Byron"; and another literary journal of the day, the *Torch*, welcomed in him "a new fountain for the old poetic waters." The young Ruskin was, in short, one of the popular Album Poets of

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his time. Ruskin's father in a letter to Harrison (1839) mentioned another "symptom of popularity": "His lines 'Remembrance' from *Friendship's Offering*, 1837–8, I see in a cheap almanack this year, and his mother was surprised by the same in a *Magazin des Modes* taken up at a milliner's." Some lines from this piece may be given as a sample of the kind of thing which won for Ruskin his first reputation :—

"I ought to be joyful; the jest and the song
And the light tones of music resound through the throng;
But its cadence falls dully and dead on my ear,
And the laughter I mimic is quenched in a tear.

For here are no longer, to bid me rejoice,
The light of thy smile, or the tone of thy voice,
And, gay though the crowd that's around me may be,
I am alone, Adèle, parted from thee."

Ruskin altered the eighth line to "I am alone, when I'm parted from thee," and made it a further condition of publication that the piece should not be signed or dated. "The gravity of the University would be shocked," he said. The gentlemen-commoners, if any of them had chanced to light on the *Offering*, would certainly have wanted to know, who is She?

III

By far the greater part of Ruskin's poems written during his Oxford days were inspired directly or indirectly by "Adèle," one of the daughters of his father's partner, M. Domecq. It was at Paris in 1833 that Ruskin first saw the five daughters of his father's Spanish partner, then living in the Champs Elysées. The eldest, Diana, was on the eve of her marriage to one of Napoleon's officers, Count Maison. The four others, much younger, were home for the holidays, and the vision of them—for they were the first well-bred and well-dressed girls he had ever spoken to—sealed itself in him. Three years later, Mr. Domecq came with the four unmarried girls on a visit to Herne Hill: "a most curious galaxy, or southern cross, of unconceived stars, floating on a sudden into my obscure firmament of London

suburb." Adèle Clothilde, the eldest of the four, was a graceful blonde of fifteen. Four days, at the most, it took to reduce him to ashes, but "the *Mercredi des cendres* lasted four years." Ruskin describes his courtship with ruthless raillery. His method was not at all that of forgoing his proper dowry, in order once and for one only to find his love a sufficient language; on the contrary, he made display of his talents in their habitual fields. Accordingly, having "on any blessed occasion of tête-à-tête endeavoured to entertain his Spanish-born, Paris-bred, and Catholic-hearted mistress with his own views upon the subjects of the Spanish Armada, the Battle of Waterloo, and the doctrine of transubstantiation," he proceeded to write a story of a bold and desperate lover, the "Bandit Leoni" and the Maiden Giuletta. This was printed in *Friendship's Offering*, and Adèle "laughed over it in rippling ecstasies of derision." He next sat down under the mulberry tree in the back garden "in a state of majestic imbecility to write a tragedy on a Venetian subject in which the sorrows of his soul were to be enshrined in immortal verse." This piece entitled *Marcolini* was deemed by Ruskin the best of his despairing poems; it shows greater power than many of the others, and power in a different direction. It cannot be said, indeed, to disclose any skill in dramatic construction; but the characters are well distinguished, and they display themselves in animated and appropriate dialogue. There are passages also which show that Ruskin could catch Shakespeare's style as cleverly as in other pieces he caught Scott's and Byron's and Shelley's. His prose was always original; his verse, always reminiscent. But the tragedy was given up, "because, when I had described a gondola, a bravo, the heroine Bianca, and moonlight on the Grand Canal, I found I had not much more to say." In 1838 Ruskin was thrown into the company of another young lady, Miss Charlotte Withers, "not pretty, but quite pleasant to see, especially if her eyes were looking your way, and her mind with them." Perhaps he was not averse from showing to his lady-love in imagination that she was not the only girl in the world; and Charlotte was more sympathetic.

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Ruskin's method had not been wholly unsuccessful in this case, and she carried off, with confidential pride, an Essay which he wrote for her, by way of sequel to a discussion between them, "On the Relative Dignity of the Studies of Painting and Music and the Advantages to be Derived from their Pursuit." This piece is of no interest in the development of Ruskin's mind. He was arguing for victory; Miss Withers had taken the side of music; and Ruskin was determined to let the painters have the best of it. In the serious thought which he devoted throughout life to the subject of music, he insisted always on its intellectual appeal; in this youthful essay he marks it down for ear-tickling sensualism. Miss Withers stayed at Herne Hill a few days only, was not invited again, and shortly afterwards was married by her parents to a well-to-do Newcastle trader. In the autumn of the same year Mr. Domecq brought his daughters again to England, to finish their schooling at a convent near Chelmsford. Ruskin's mother took him down with her on a visit, when the young ladies were allowed to chat with him in the parlour, and it was arranged that they should spend their holidays at Herne Hill. The mother must have dismissed the idea of her Puritan-bred son actually marrying a Spanish Catholic as unthinkable; the fathers on each side would have seen conveniences in such a finale, and Ruskin's father had indulgent memories of his own youth. To the young lover there was solace in the thought "that she was really in England, really over *there*, and that she was shut up in a convent and couldn't be seen by anybody, or spoken to, but by nuns; and that perhaps she wouldn't quite like it, and would like to come to Herne Hill again, and bear with me a little." She came and stayed some weeks; he was as devoted, but she as lightly laughing, as before. The fidelity of Mr. Traddles with the conversational abilities of Mr. Toots were no recommendation, even though supplemented by poetical offerings, in the eyes of the sparkling Adèle. She returned to Paris, and a year later negotiations were entered upon for her marriage to Baron Duquesne, a rich and handsome Frenchman.

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The less satisfied the lover was with himself in real life, the more he sought to invest his feelings with worthy utterance in verse. The whole story of his love may thus be traced in the Poems; in the passionate yearning of the earlier lines, and, when the final disappointment came, in the bitterness of memory and its pang. After the first visit of Adèle and her sisters to Herne Hill, Ruskin celebrates her "glory" and her "grace," and lingers over her "last smile." She departs; he sends her "Good-night" across the sea. Her name is named in company; he falters for a moment, but, in lines of real dignity and compression, nerves himself to be firm. Among many Verses to Adèle in absence, during 1837 and 1838, are "The Mirror," "Nature Untenanted," and "Remembrance." In 1838 Adèle and her sisters spent the Christmas holidays at Herne Hill; the song, "Though thou hast not a feeling for one Who is torn by too many for thee," sufficiently tells the story. Other pieces of the same date and motive are "Memory," "The Name," and "Fragment from a Meteorological Journal." The fact of Adèle's betrothal was for a time kept from Ruskin's knowledge by his parents, who feared that the disappointment would interfere with his studies at Oxford. The verses, "To Adèle," written in the first half of 1839, are not yet without all hope. At about this time Ruskin's parents, distressed at his discomfortable state of mind about Adèle, threw him into the society of a daughter of a City merchant, Mr. Wardell. But Miss Wardell's charms did not appeal to him, and she died soon afterwards. Meanwhile, at Christmas 1839, Adèle and her sisters were again at Herne Hill. It is not clear whether Ruskin at this time knew the truth or not. The negotiations for the marriage continued, and it took place in March 1840. The long poem, "Farewell," is dated as if on the eve of their last meeting and parting. This piece was, as we learn from the correspondence between Ruskin's father and W. H. Harrison, a particular "pet" with its author. He took unusual pains with it, polishing it and polishing again.

Another series of Ruskin's Poems—the pieces on themes taken from Herodotus—were in some cases written as a relief

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from the sorrows of unrequited love, but partly also in connexion with his studies at Oxford. "I wrote 'The Tears of Psammenitus,'" he told a College friend, "and five or six other pieces, as illustrations of Herodotus, partly because I thought there was a great deal of the picturesque lying neglected in this historian, and partly to fix the history in my mind while I read it." "The Scythian Grave," "The Scythian Banquet Song," "The Scythian Guest," "Aristodemus at Platæa," "The Last Song of Arion," and "The Recreant" were all thus founded on Herodotus. Schlegel, before Ruskin's time, in his "Arion," and Matthew Arnold, after him, in "Mycerinus," went to the same source. Ruskin's pieces are spirited, but imitative. His father complained that they savoured too strongly of "the shambles"; and in most of them there is a note of gruesome realism in marked contrast to Ruskin's habitual theory and practice in art. The morbid strain in them came from the depth of his wounded passion. In his diary at Naples (March 12, 1841), in a reference to Adèle's marriage, he recalls "that evening in Christ Church when I first knew of it, and went staggering along down the dark passage through the howling wind to Child's room, and sat there with him working through interminable problems." In the composition of the Herodotean poems, Ruskin found a further distraction. His friend, Clayton, had been critical of "Psammenitus," and he replied that "the thing was written in two hours as a relief from strong and painful excitement." This was the news of Adèle's marriage, and the emotional strain doubtless was a cause contributory to his breakdown at Oxford.

IV

The poems of Nature, which Ruskin continued to write occasionally until 1845, were more in his proper vein. Close observation may be discerned in his earliest verses, and a greater intensity of feeling gives to the later pieces a corresponding intensity of expression. The "unrestrained facility," noted by Ruskin's father as his son's besetting sin in versification, often gives place in the later pieces to

concentration. Yet even so there is more of rhetorical effort than of natural magic; as in the opening lines of "The Alps seen from Marengo (1844)":— CHAP. IV.

> "The glory of a cloud—without its wane;
> The stillness of the earth—but not its gloom;
> The loveliness of life—without its pain;
> The peace—but not the hunger—of the tomb!"

An eminent critic, in discussing the "truth and beauty" of an Alpine description in *Modern Painters*, has only one objection to suggest: "that Mr. Ruskin is there trying to make prose do more than it can perfectly do; that what he is there attempting he will never, except in poetry, be able to accomplish to his own entire satisfaction."[1] The actual process of Ruskin's experiments was the reverse. He sought to accomplish in prose what he found that he could not to his satisfaction express in verse. "I perceived finally," he wrote of his travels in 1845, "that I could express nothing I had to say, rightly, in that manner; and the peace of mind which returns to me as the principal character of this journey was perhaps, in part, the result of this extremely wholesome conclusion."

Why was Ruskin not a poet? Many pages have been written by ingenious pens on the question in a more general form—on the incompatibility between poetry and prose-poetry—and I have read disquisitions also on the particular case of Ruskin; but I have never felt that these discussions carry us very far. "No writer of florid prose," says Landor, "ever was more than a secondary poet." Plato had failed in poetry, before he turned to imaginative prose; and Carlyle's verse was always wooden. "Poetry," continues Landor, "in her high estate is delighted with exuberant abundance, but imposes on her worshipper a severity of selection." And certainly Ruskin's mind was often too discursive to take kindly to the restraints of poetic form. Yet he was a writer of stately as well as of florid prose; and some writers of stately prose have been among the greatest of poets. Ruskin had to the full the poet's vision and the poet's sensibility;

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*.

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he had, too, facility, and a fine sense of rhythmic cadence. But the poet's gift of constructive imagination, and the magic of concentrated expression, were denied to him. It has been suggested that the analytical turn of his mind, and the sub-humorous strain of irony in his thought, were inconsistent with poetical expression; but Byron was analytical and ironic. It has been said, again, that he had no experience of life when he wrote his verses; but this explanation is not wholly adequate, for Ruskin's experience of love had been real and deep enough. Such discussions seem only to bring us back to what is written in the Book: "there are diversities of gifts," and "the wind bloweth where it listeth."

The extinction of the poetic impulse in Ruskin, and his recognition that his true medium was prose, were a grievous disappointment to his father. On the tour of 1845 he had sent home some pieces. His father's verdict was severe (June 26):—

"I am, to speak truth, disappointed in the last lines sent home, and you see by enclosed Harrison is of same opinion. The Scythian Banquet Song, which you think little of, was the greatest of all your poetical productions. All the Herodotean pieces show real power, and have a spice of the devil in them. I mean nothing irreverent, but the fervour and fury and passion of true poetry. . . . Your poetry at present has got among your prose, and it may be well to leave it there till the important book be done, which I am certain will overflow with poetry."

Ruskin replied from Parma (July 10):—

"I am not surprised at the lines being so far inferior, but I do not think I have lost power. I have only lost the exciting circumstances. The life I lead is far too comfortable and regular, too luxurious, too hardening. I see nothing of human life, but waiters, doganiers, and beggars. I get into no scrapes, suffer no inconveniences, and am subject to no species of excitement except that arising from art, which I conceive to be too abstract in its nature to become productive of poetry, unless combined with experience of living passion. I don't see how it is possible for a person who gets up at four, goes to bed at ten, eats ices when he is hot, beef when he is hungry, gets rid of all claims

of charity by giving money which he hasn't earned, and of those of compassion by treating all distress more as picturesque than as real—I don't see how it is at all possible for such a person to write good poetry. . . . Nevertheless I believe my mind has made great progress in many points since that poetical time. I perhaps could not—but I certainly would not, now write such things. I might write more tamely, but I think I should write better sense, and possibly if I were again under such morbid excitement, I might write as strongly, but with more manly meaning. I believe, however, the time for it has past."

There was excellent sense in this reply; and I have sometimes thought that the best things about Ruskin's poems are the letters which he wrote concerning them. The young Ruskin ought from his upbringing to have been an insufferable prig, but he was blessed with a saving sense of humour. His letters about his poems, whether of expostulation with editors who cut them down, or of apology to friends who cut them up, or of deprecation to a fond father who doted on them, are all alike remarkable for fun and sense. He had sent to Harrison some verses entitled "The Mirror," beginning:—

> "It saw, it knew thy loveliness,
> Thy burning lip, and glancing eye,
> Each lightning look, each silken tress
> Thy marble forehead braided by,
> Like an embodied music, twined
> About a brightly breathing mind."

We proceed with "breathing" and "glowing" and "faces" and "graces," and conclude with:—

> "My thoughts are with that beauty blest,
> A breathing, burning, living vision,"

and so forth, and so forth. The editor, in submitting the proof, thought that there was too much burning and suggested emendations. The poet thus replied:—

(*To* W. H. Harrison.) "Oxford, *April* 8, 1837. . . . *Burning lip.* You put my 'burnings' in such formidable juxtaposition

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that I begin to think there is some probability of my setting the Thames on fire, although I am afraid the more general opinion would be that there was 'burning instead of beauty.' I am afraid, however, that in this first instance we must blaze away. Rosy and ruby are somewhat the worse for the wear; they are besides weak, and only simply colour, without expression. The idea that I wish to convey by 'burning' is that of a lip which when it opens is like the opening of a crimson cloud when the west is most glorious, with the smiles and the expression flashing about it, and from it, like the sheet lightning when it gleams fastest and brightest, kindling its accents into a quivering music. . . . Kindling is the only word which could be substituted, and that is a spindle-shanked sort of a word, which I do not think you will consider preferable to the original epithet, that is, if we can get rid of our inferior conflagration in the last stanza. . . .

"And now for some 'visionary lines'—suppose, in the second of the last verse we were to knock down the fire and breath with an 'everlasting' by way of a 'temporary' relief, or, let me see what epithets can we apply to visions in general: there are sweet visions, like a baby's anticipation of sugared bread and butter, or a school-boy's estimation of the probable magnitude of future plum-cakes; there are misty visions, like those of the same young gentleman, after receiving a disagreeable piece of persuasion, in his dexter or sinister optic. There are perpetual visions, like a curate's of a mitre; angelically rare visions, like a young, and golden visions like an old, lawyer's of a litigious client; mysterious visions, like a pig's of the mind; awful visions, like the first glance of a poet's manuscript—but none of these epithets will apply to this sort of vision. . . ."

Against a plea for the restoration of pages and pages of the "Bandit's" passion, the editor had been adamant: on the epithets in the shorter piece, he was more yielding. "The Mirror" was left to breathe and burn — to the heart's content of the poet, and to the further rippling merriment, it is to be feared, of his lady-love. But even with regard to the pieces which enshrined his most passionate feelings, the poet was able to perceive the humorous side of things. The "Farewell," mentioned above (p. 95), is a

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Library

long poem, and Ruskin wrote to the editor (March 22, May 9, 1840):— CHAP. IV.

"I rather think, on looking over the long dream-poem, that we must cut it into two, for in the first or second stanza I inform the young lady that on the whole it is my opinion she had much better 'Let silence guard, with calm control, The grief my words were weak to tell,' and hers 'unable to console'; after which expression of opinion, I proceed to indulge her with a treatise on oneirology some 250 heroics long."

"I can't tell what to call the long thing. If it is to be a Farewell, it is a deuced lucky thing there's no omnibus waiting."

Ruskin was doubtless chary of showing his poems to his Christ Church companions. Bob Grimston, for instance, would not have had much sympathetic indulgence for despairing Bandits, breathing Mirrors, or agonised Farewells. Even Acland found the recitation of them a little tedious. And in later years Ruskin had no weakness whatever for his poems, and would admit no indulgence to be shown to them by others.[1] In 1861 Mrs. Penny, a popular writer of the day, and a daughter of Ruskin's College tutor, Mr. Brown, had quoted in her novel *The Romance of a Dull Life*, as very beautiful, Ruskin's lines on "The Hills of Carrara." They are among his better pieces, and have found their way into some anthologies; but here is Ruskin's criticism, illustrated by references to poems which every reader will recognise, such as Shelley's translation of the Hymn to Mercury, Hood's Death Bed, and Malherbe's Consolation à M. du Périer:—

(*To his Father.*) "LUCERNE, *2nd Nov.* 1861.—I shall have pleasure in seeing the 'Romance of a dull life'—but not if there are more of my verses in it. These are melodious enough—but alas, they are but nonsense, written in the loosest and most

[1] Collectors who possess the reprint of *Leoni*, purporting to have a preface by Ruskin dated 1868, or the reprint of *The Scythian Guest*, similarly prefaced and dated 1849, may question this statement. But these reprints and "prefaces" were not Ruskin's, but literary "fakes": see Library Edition, vol. i. p. 288, vol. ii. p. 102 *n.*

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inaccurate English. A sound and close criticism of them would be as follows.

1. 'The couchant strength, etc., Of thoughts they keep, and throbs they feel.'

"If a throb is felt, its strength cannot be 'couchant'; if unfelt, it cannot be a 'throb.' By 'thoughts they keep,' does the writer mean 'thoughts they keep thinking'? or 'thoughts they keep to themselves'? In either case, the completed phrase is as ungraceful as the contracted one is obscure.

2. 'May need an answering music,' etc.

"It is difficult to see how anything can be answered, when nothing has been said.

3. 'Music to unseal.'

"'Couchant strength' is not usually 'unsealed.' You do not 'unseal a lion.' In the use of objects which can be unsealed, such as documents or old wine, music is not the instrument likely to be employed.

4. 'What waves may stir the silent sea.'

"Waves do not stir the sea. They are a result of the sea's being stirred.

5. 'Beneath the low appeal . . . Of winds unfelt,' etc.

"This would have been rather a pretty image if, in the course of the preceding five lines, the writer had not forgotten what he was talking about. The rise of waves in consequence of the action of wind at a distance might prettily illustrate the existence of emotion for which there was no visible cause, but it cannot illustrate the Absence of emotion for which a cause is presumed to exist.

6. 'Within the winding shell . . . of those that touch it well.'

"Shells used for musical purposes were of two kinds. Spiral shells were not 'touched,' but blown like trumpets, and made loud and disagreeable noises, for the tones of which, indeed, no one could be answerable but the performer. The shells which (or, more accurately, the strings of which) were 'touched' to produce sound, were originally tortoise shells, and had no 'windings.'

The writer's fancy appears to be as much at fault as his information, for we are much mistaken if the whole passage is not merely a blundering reminiscence of two others, one of which he has not understood, and the other he has never appreciated—namely, Shelley's beautiful 'Up from beneath his hand a tumult went' of Mercury playing the first tortoise-shell lyre; and Wordsworth's exquisitely accurate—

> 'Applying to his ear,
> The Convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell.'

I should not at the time have liked this criticism to appear in the *Times*, but it would have done me 'yeoman's service' if it had.

"You may nearly always know in a moment whether poetry is good and true, by writing it in prose form. If it then reads like strong and sensible or tender and finished prose, and is perfectly simple, it is good:—

> You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet; where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone? of two such lessons, why forget the nobler and the manlier one?
>
> But, when the dawn came, dim, and sad, and chill with early showers, her quiet eyelids closed. She had another morn than ours.
>
> Mais elle était du monde, où les plus belles choses Ont le pire destin; Et, rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses, L'espace d'un matin.

"In some cases reversion is admissible—or even desirable—but it is always a fault if it will not read as a vigorous prose form also. Intense simplicity is the first characteristic of the greatest poetry. I wish I could let you hear the melodious simplicity of the Greek epitaph on the Slave, Zosima:—

> 'Zosima, while she lived, was a slave in her body only,
> Now, she has gained freedom for that, also.'

Or this, on Epictetus:—

> 'I was Epictetus, a slave, and a cripple,
> Penniless, and Beloved of the Gods.'"

Mr. Harrison, who treasured his publication of Ruskin's poems as the eagle's feather of his editorship, wrote piously

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to ask what was "the classical source of inspiration" for a passage in "The Last Song of Arion":—

> "Farewell! but do not grieve: thy pain
> Would seek me where I sleep;
> Thy tears would pierce, like rushing rain,
> The stillness of the deep."

Ruskin replied with this piece of general criticism:—

(*To* W. H. Harrison.) "Denmark Hill, *Monday*.—I was quite horror-struck when, on reading over the note you so kindly left me, I discovered that it referred not to 'Orion,' the Epic [by Horne], as I thought, but to a piece of nonsense of which I was not vain when I wrote it, and am now most heartily ashamed.

"I recollect showing it in a beseeching way to Henry Acland, who, after reading it *patiently* (all honour to his friendship!) all through, said, with a quiet, annihilating smile, 'My dear R., mightn't Arion have done *something* more than lament over his country and his mistress?' The fact is, that every *thought* in it—and it hasn't many—is so irretrievably well known and well used, that I am as much surprised at any trouble being taken about their genealogy, as if I had been asked for a list of all the snuff-stained fingers which a dirty Scotch one-pound note—coming to pieces in mine from sheer age—might possibly have mouldered through. Nevertheless, I can very honestly say, respecting these same dirty notes, that I found them in my own purse without knowing how they came there: and I believe their very commonplaceness arises from their being the genuine and natural expressions of true passion at any age of the world, *rather* than from their being borrowed by one writer from another. . . .

"I was about to say, that when I spoke of the feeling in question being common to all *ages* of the world, it was not among all *nations* that I suppose it to have been so, but only among those with whom some traditions of the Patriarchal or Mosaic dispensations had distinctly remained, or in modern times among Christians. Almost all true *ghost* feeling is, I believe, Christian; but the most pure and beautiful expression of this particular one that I recollect is in the Border ballad—

> '. . . . The Bairnies grat;
> The Mither, though under the mools, heard *that*.'

"I conceive that nothing can beat the purity and precision and intensity of this poetic diction. The bringing the unimportant word to the end of the line when you are compelled to lay the right emphasis upon it by the rhyme; the straightforward unadorned simplicity of it; the quiet order of the natural words—how superior to my turgid piece of cold, degrading, and unnatural simile: 'Thy tears would pierce like *rushing rain*'—as if rain ever *did* pierce to a dead man's ear, or as if tears were no more to be counted of than protoxide of hydrogen, or as if a dying man would have thought of the tears being like anything but themselves, or as if a loving man would ever have compared his mistress's tears to a thunder-shower. . . ."

The two old friends—Ruskin's father and W. H. Harrison—mingled their regrets and contrived their consolations when the poet abandoned the rôle. "I wish," wrote the father to Harrison (July 16, 1845), "that his mother may not be right after all, and our son prove but a poet in prose." The mother was right, and Ruskin's choice was final. The father determined to console himself by raising a memorial to his hopes. "I want," he wrote to Harrison (March 8, 1847), "to get the best of all he has ever penned selected and printed in a good type, but not published; in fact, to be merely called 'Poems, etc., printed but not published by J. R. They are worth collecting for a family Record, and the expense would not be great, if I could get his own consent; but I believe I should have both him and his mama against the project." Ruskin had not the heart to exercise an absolute veto, and three years later the project was carried out by his father and Harrison. The privately-printed volume is in its genuinely original form the rarest of Ruskiniana. Only fifty copies were printed, and of these several were subsequently destroyed by Ruskin. The volume was, however, reprinted some years later in America, where it had a considerable sale; the reprint included, in addition to Ruskin's own work, one spurious piece. Ruskin regretted the English collection, and was much vexed when he heard of his father giving copies away. "I am seriously annoyed," he wrote to Dr. John Brown (Lucerne, Dec. 3, 1861), "by my

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father's sending you those effete and vile verses of mine, in which the good which they do by humiliation is neutralised by the unhealthiness of the discouragement and disgust which seize me whenever I see or hear of them."

Ruskin, then, repented of his false start whole-heartedly. "I wasted several good years of my life," he said, "in verse-writing when I had nothing to say."[1] Yet it was not all waste, either. "Though I shall always think," he wrote elsewhere, "these early years might have been better spent, they had their reward. As soon as I had anything really to say, I was able sufficiently to say it."[2] The studies which gave him something to say, and the impulse which came upon him to say it, will be told in the next chapter.

[1] *My First Editor*, § 7.
[2] *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*, Lib. Ed., xxxii. p. 98.

CHAPTER V

THE CALL

(1840–1842)

> "Thy lot or portion in life," said the Caliph Ali, "is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it."—EMERSON.

THE illness which ended Ruskin's course at Oxford was destined to set him in the path which led to *Modern Painters*. He knew it not at the time; he was still to be dragged about in search of health, and to drift for a while somewhat aimlessly, as it seemed, on the current of circumstance from day to day; he appeared to himself, on looking back, to have been, for a year or two yet, "simply a little floppy and soppy tadpole,—little more than a stomach with a tail to it, flattening and wriggling itself up the crystal ripples and in the pure sands of the spring-head of youth." "But there were always good eyes in me," he adds; and to those who keep their eyes and their hearts open, the Call comes in due season. An incident which occurred shortly after Ruskin went down from Oxford was prophetic. On June 22, 1840, he dined with Mr. Griffith, the picture-dealer, at Norwood, and there for the first time met the man whom he was afterwards to call his Earthly Master. He records the occasion in his diary:—

"Introduced to-day to the man who beyond all doubt is the greatest of the age; greatest in every faculty of the imagination, in every branch of scenic knowledge; at once *the* painter and poet of the day, J. M. W. Turner. Everybody had described him to me as coarse, boorish, unintellectual, vulgar. This I knew to be impossible. I found in him a somewhat eccentric, keen-mannered, matter-of-fact, English-minded — gentleman:

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good-natured evidently, bad-tempered evidently, hating humbug of all sorts, shrewd, perhaps a little selfish, highly intellectual, the powers of the mind not brought out with any delight in their manifestation, or intention of display, but flashing out occasionally in a word or a look."[1]

Though Turner spoke kindly to Ruskin, he took no particular notice of him on this occasion; but personal knowledge of the man was now added to admiration of the artist.

I

Released from the pressure of work for the Schools, Ruskin set himself to drawing and to quiet reading; but presently the bad symptoms returned, and the doctors ordered him abroad to winter in Italy. His father left the office-desk, and the party—father, mother, Ruskin, and Cousin Mary—set out for a journey of ten months on the Continent. The travel in beautiful country gave healthy stimulus to his artistic faculties. He took counsel before starting with his painter-friends, and received the usual conflict of advice. "Harding said to me yesterday," he wrote to Acland, "'Never use a lead pencil, or a brush, when you are sketching from nature; do everything in *chalk*. I never made twenty coloured sketches in my life.' De Wint said to me, 'Never take anything up but your brush and moist colours.' Roberts advised pencil—and Turner everything, and I shall take his advice, for your material should vary with your subject."

[1] According to Dean Kitchin (who had the story from Bishop Creighton), Ruskin had previously met Turner at Oxford. The "story was told me," wrote Creighton, "by old Ryman the printseller. He told me that Ruskin as an undergraduate would sometimes draw in his parlour from the prints. One day, while he was so engaged, Turner came into the shop on business. Ryman told him there was a young man drawing, and took him into the parlour. He looked over Ruskin's shoulder, and said, 'The young man draws very nicely.' That was the first meeting of the two" (*St. George*, vol. iv., 1901, p. 29). Mr. Holman Hunt tells the same story, adding that "thus began the personal friendship between the two" (*Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 1905, vol. i. p. 323). One would like to accept the tale; but it seems incredible that Ruskin should not have remembered and recorded the incident, if it had really happened.

But the principal influence was that of David Roberts, whose sketches in Egypt and the Holy Land had been exhibited in the spring of this year. They "taught me," says Ruskin, "of absolute good, the use of the fine point instead of the blunt one; attention and indefatigable correctness of detail; and the simplest means of expressing ordinary light and shade on grey ground, flat wash for the full shadows, and the heightening of the gradated lights by warm white." His pencil was very busy throughout the tour. "I have got a decent number of sketches," he wrote to a College friend, "forty-seven large size, and thirty-four small." Many of these have been exhibited; and the best of them show remarkable decision and delicacy in pencil-touch. One of them, of the Piazza S. Maria del Pianto, at Rome was lithographed a year or two later in *The Amateur's Portfolio of Sketches*, a collection issued by the firm of Colnaghi. In another (now at Oxford), of the Casa Contarini Fasan at Venice, Ruskin took some pride because "Prout was so pleased with it that he borrowed it, and made from it the upright drawing of the palace with the rich balconies which now represent his work very widely as a chromo-lithotint."

Of the first part of the tour, account was dutifully rendered to his old tutor:—

(*To the* Rev. Thomas Dale.) "Rome, *Dec.* 31, 1840. . . . We sauntered leisurely enough through France, taking some six weeks from Calais to Nice, and passing over most of the characteristic portions of French landscape. . . . The ignorance of the lower classes seems about equal everywhere; but in the north it is active, energetic, feeling and enthusiastic, in the south dull, degraded and slothful. La Vierge Noire, the presiding Deity of Chartres Cathedral, is a little black lady about three feet high. The devotion of the whole city to her is quite inexpressible; they are perpetually changing her petticoats, making her presents of pink pincushions, silk reticules, and tallow 'dips' by the hundredweight, with occasional silver or plated hearts in cases of especial ingratiation. . . . The worshippers stagger dreamily into the church, generally lame or weak with some chronic disease,

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mutter their prayers in the mere fulfilment of peremptory habit, kneel, seemingly without a desire, and rise, seemingly without a hope. . . ."

—and so forth, with other remarks on benighted lands, pleasing to the ear of Mr. Dale, and in accord with Ruskin's own feelings at the time. Yet his heart was open to more catholic impressions. He and his father visited the convent of St. Michael, on the summit of the isolated peak of lava at Le Puy. The cheerful simplicity, the happy sincerity, of the Sister with whom they discoursed on the dividing points of doctrine between Catholics and Protestants stayed in his memory and bore fruit in time. Carrara greatly impressed him, as appears from a letter to a friend:—

(*To the* Rev. E. Clayton.)—"Imagine a range of noble mountains from 5000 to 7000 feet high, terminating in jagged and inaccessible peaks, on whose bases, fourteen miles off, you can just discern two little white chips, as if a cannon ball had grazed the hills. These, as you get nearer, increase in apparent size till, after a walk over an old Roman road paved with marble, you arrive at the lowest, which you find to be a group of seven or eight quarries, each the size of the great one on Headingdon, and the last deep and large, in rocks of lump-sugar—exquisite, snow-white, stainless marble—out of whose dead mass life is leaping day by day into every palace of Europe."

The same thought is expressed in the verses, "The Hills of Carrara," which Ruskin wrote at this time. We have heard his ruthless criticism of certain lines in the poem, but some others are worth citing:—

"Far in the depths of voiceless skies,
Where calm and cold the stars are strewed,
The peaks of pale Carrara rise.
Nor sound of storm, nor whirlwind rude,
Can break their marble solitude. . . .

But far beneath, in folded sleep,
Faint forms of heavenly life are laid,
With pale brows and soft eyes, that keep
Sweet peace of unawakened shade;

Whose wreathèd limbs, in robes of rock arrayed,
Fall like white waves on human thought,
In fitful dreams displayed;
Deep through their secret homes of slumber sought,
They rise immortal, children of the day,
Gleaming with godlike forms on earth, and her decay."

Had Ruskin read Michael Angelo's sonnet about the sculptor giving life to the soul imprisoned in the marble? Perhaps not yet, though he refers to it in the second volume of *Modern Painters.*

From Carrara on to Pisa, Florence, Rome, and Naples. The solemnity and purity of the architecture of Pisa impressed him deeply; but the first sight of Florence and of Rome—an experience which makes an epoch in the lives of many men—left Ruskin cold. His impressions, as he wrote them down at the time in his diary and in letters to friends, were at any rate his own; and some of them—such as his opinion of St. Peter's—remained with him always; of others, and especially of his want of feeling for Florence, he became, as he records in his autobiography, heartily ashamed. Italian art, except only that of Michael Angelo, was as yet a sealed book; and at Rome historical associations and archæology made no appeal. "I was not quite sure," he says, "whether Trajan lived before Christ or after, and would have thanked, with a sense of relieved satisfaction, anybody who might have told me that Marcus Antoninus was a Roman philosopher contemporary with Socrates!" His interest was that of the sketcher, not of the student. The limitations of his outlook, and his varying moods, appear successively in notes of travel:—

"Florence, *November 13th*, 1840.—I have just been walking, or sauntering, in the square of the statues, the air perfectly balmy; and I shall not soon forget, I hope, the impression left by this square as it opened from the river, with the enormous mass of tower above,—or of the Duomo itself. . . . Not that it is good as architecture even in its own barbarous style. I cannot tell what to think of it; but the wealth of exterior marble is quite

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overwhelming, and the notion of magnificent figures in marble and bronze about the great square, thrilling.

"*Nov.* 15*th*.—I cannot make up my mind about this place, though my present feelings are of grievous disappointment."

(*To the* Rev. E. Clayton.) "Rome, *Dec.* 3, 1840.—I have not made up my mind about St. Peter's: there is certainly a great deal too much light in it, which destroys size; it is kept a little too clean, and the light colours of its invaluable marbles tell gaudily, and the roof is ugly, merely a great basket of golden wickerwork; but if you go into its details, and examine its colossal pieces of sculpture which gleam through every shadow, the thorough *get up* of the whole, the going the *whole hog*, the inimitable, the unimaginable art displayed in every corner and hole, the concentration of human intellect and of the rarest and most beautiful materials that God has given for it to work with, unite to raise such feelings as we can have only once or twice in our lives."

(*To the* Rev. T. Dale.) "Rome, *Dec.* 31, 1840. . . . St. Peter's I expected to be *disappointed* in. I was *disgusted*. . . . In the city, if you take a carriage and drive to express points of lionisation, I believe that most people of good taste would expect little and find less. The Capitol is a melancholy rubbishy square of average Palladian—modern; the Forum, a good group of smashed columns, just what, if it were got up, as it very easily might be, at Virginia Water, we should call a piece of humbug—the kind of thing that one is sick to death of in 'compositions'; the Coliseum I have always considered a public nuisance, like Jim Crow; and the rest of the ruins are mere mountains of shattered, shapeless brick, covering miles of ground with a Babylon-like weight of red tiles. But if, instead of driving, with excited expectation, to particular points, you saunter leisurely up one street and down another, yielding to every impulse, peeping into every corner, and keeping your observation active, the impression is exceedingly changed. There is not a fragment, a stone, or a chimney, ancient or modern, that is not in itself a study, not an inch of ground that can be passed over without its claim of admiration and offer of instruction, and you return home in hopeless conviction that were you to substitute years for the

days of your appointed stay, they would not be enough for the estimation or examination of Rome. Yet the impression of this perpetual beauty is more painful than pleasing, for there is a strange horror lying over the whole city, which I can neither describe nor account for; it is a shadow of death, possessing and penetrating all things. The sunlight is lurid and ghastly, though so intense that neither the eye nor the body can bear it long; the shadows are cold and sepulchral; you feel like an artist in a fever, haunted by every dream of beauty that his imagination ever dwelt upon, but all mixed with the fever fear. I am certain this is not imagination, for I am not iven to such nonsense, and, even in illness, never remember feeling anything approaching to the horror with which some objects here can affect me. It is all like a vast churchyard, with a diseased and dying population living in the shade of its tombstones."

(*To* W. H. Harrison.) "Naples, *Jan.* 30, 1841. . . . I am most thoroughly in my element here, having every possible source of enjoyment—Apennines round a horizon of 150 miles, sheeted with snow; sea, such as you never saw—nor I neither till I got here—blue and clear, as any sapphire; fortresses and rocks more than I can sketch—and a population whose every motion is a study—and a Volcano. What more can one have on earth?"

A perusal of the diary shows that Ruskin was at this time suffering from much morbid languor. He was in ill-health, he was still nursing unavailing memories of Adèle, and smarting from the disappointment of a broken career at Oxford.[1] References to his cough, to trouble with his eyes, to wasted years at the University, are frequent also in his letters of the time. At Rome, at Christmas-time, he had an attack of fever; at Albano, on the way back from Naples, the consumptive symptoms returned, but passed away with the coming of the spring. The morbid taint is apparent in his letters from Rome. The weeks which he spent there gave him, however, many excellent sketching-subjects, and other things more valuable.

[1] For instance: on occasion of lunch among the cinders of Monte Somma he remarks that the merry guides "little thought of the dark ashes my spirit was lying in."

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Acland had provided him with introductions to Joseph Severn—the friend of all English visitors to Rome at that time—and to George Richmond, then painting with his elder brother, Tom, in a Roman studio. "What a poetical countenance!' exclaimed "Keats's Severn," on first catching sight of Ruskin on the stairs. With Severn, Ruskin was in after years to be connected closely; and these days at Rome began a friendship with Richmond which lasted throughout life. It was during this Roman winter, too, that Ruskin saw, at many a musical service, "above the bowed heads of the Italian crowd, for an instant or two before she also stooped—or sometimes eminent in her grace above a stunted group of them,—a fair English girl, who was not only the admitted queen of beauty in the English circle, of that winter in Rome, but was so, in the kind of beauty which I had only hitherto dreamed of as possible, but never yet seen living—statuesque severity with womanly sweetness joined." Many years were to pass before Ruskin saw his Egeria again; she was Miss Tollemache, afterwards Mrs. Cowper-Temple, the φίλη to whom later editions of *Sesame and Lilies* are dedicated—a great and beautiful influence on his later life.

In company with Severn and the Richmonds Ruskin saw the galleries of Rome, and spent long evenings in the talk of the studios. The young man was as full of enthusiasm as any of them could be for Michael Angelo, but "fired up under their feet in little splutters and spitfires of the most appalling heresies," speaking disrespectfully of Raphael and Domenichino—much to his father's alarm. "I'd give something now," wrote Ruskin to Richmond in 1886, "to have heard something of Papa's consultations with you about his Prodigal Son." But Ruskin went his own way—leaving classical art on the other side, and concentrating his mind on what he found of picturesque in Roman by-streets, and on the study of hills and clouds. His mission in life, he used to say, was to teach people to see, to be an interpreter of nature. How closely he himself saw, how conscientiously he noted, is shown by his diary; and the very refusal of his mind to receive

strong impressions at this time from historical monuments or architecture or mediæval painting served to mark out the course which was leading to the first volume of *Modern Painters*. "When every moment," he wrote to Harrison from Naples, "offers some fresh change in cloud, or wave, or hill, I should think it rank heresy to waste one moment's thought on anything but observation." The entries in the diary are often like those brilliant impressions by Turner which may be seen in the water-colour rooms of the National Gallery. We may see them now, but Ruskin had not seen them. Many of them are of much the same date as Ruskin's tour; the artist was noting effects with his brush; his interpreter, with the pen. The coincidence is not the least interesting of the events which link two great names together. Here, for instance, is the entry made at Sestri (Nov. 4, 1840):—

"The clouds were rising gradually from the Apennines, fragments entangled here and there in the ravines catching the level sunlight like so many tongues of fire; the dark blue outline of the hills clear as crystal against a pale distant purity of green sky, the sun touching here and there upon their turfy precipices, and the white, square villages along the gulph gleaming like silver to the north-west;—a mass of higher mountain, plunging down into broad valleys dark with olive, their summits at first grey with rain, then deep blue with flying showers—the sun suddenly catching the near woods at their base, already coloured exquisitely by the autumn, with such a burst of robing, penetrating glow as Turner only could even imagine, set off by the grey storm behind."

And here is a note made at Naples (Jan. 17, 1841):—

"There was an effect on St. Elmo I would have given anything to keep—its beautiful outline was dark against streaks of blue sky and white cloud—horizontal,—and yet its mass was touched with sun in places, so as to give it colour and solidity; clouds like smoke, hovering on the hill below and enclosing the sky-opening, and the square masses of the city in shade, one or two houses only coming out in fragments of sunlight; the smoke

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from the palace-manufactory close to me rose in an oblique column, terminating the group with a lovely line of blue mist. It was a Turner."

The diary was written for no eyes but his own—"neither to please papa," he says, "nor to be printed, with corrections, by Mr. Harrison." The editor of *Friendship's Offering*, scenting "good copy" in the impressions of his young genius among romantic scenery, wrote to know what he was writing, and seems to have reminded him that Byron was said to have composed on the Lake of Geneva. The bait was artful, but Ruskin was not to be caught. "I have written absolutely nothing," he replied, "and don't feel inclined." The notes in his diary were for his own satisfaction, to keep memory of things seen; and one or two further extracts are here given to show (as Ruskin himself claimed for them) "the constant watchfulness upon which the statements in *Modern Painters* were afterwards founded." The first of the following entries is the note of the ravine under Ariccia, the subject of one of the oftenest quoted passages in *Modern Painters*; the remarks appended to the second entry were added by Ruskin when he was going through the diary for his autobiography:—

"ALBANO, *Jan.* 6.—Just beyond, descended into a hollow with another village on the hill opposite, a most elegant and finished group of church towers and roof, infinitely varied outline against sky, descending by delicious colour and delicate upright leafless sprigs of tree, into a dark rich toned depth of ravine, out of which rose, nearer, and clear against its shade, a grey wall of rock—an absolute miracle for blending of bright lichenous colour; our descending road bordered by bright yellow stumpy trees, leaning over it in heavy masses (with thick trunks covered with ivy and feathery leafage), giving a symmetry to the foreground; their trunks rising, from bold fragments of projecting tiers loaded with vegetation of the richest possible tone, the whole thing for about three minutes of rapidly changing composition absolutely unparalleled in my experience, especially for its total independence of *all* atmospheric effect, being under a grey and unbroken

sky with rain as bright as a first-rate Turner. I got quite sick with delight."

"NAPLES, *Jan.* 9.—Dressed yesterday at Mola by a window commanding a misty sunrise over the sea—a grove of oranges sloping down to the beach, flushed with its light; Gaeta opposite, glittering along its promontory. Ran out to terrace at side of the house, a leaden bit of roof, with pots of orange and Indian fig. There was a range of Skiddaw-like mountains rising from the shore, the ravines just like those of Saddleback, or the west side of Skiddaw; the higher parts bright with fresh-fallen snow; the highest, misty with a touch of soft white, swift[1] cloud. . . . The sun kept with us as we drove through the village;—confined streets, but bright and varied, down to the shore, and then under the slopes of the snowy precipice, now thoroughly dazzling with the risen sun, and between hedges of tall myrtle, into the plain of Garigliano. A heavy rain-cloud raced[2] us the ten miles, and stooped over us, stealing the blue sky inch by inch, till it had left only a strip of amber-blue[3] behind the Apennines, the near hills thrown into deep dark purple shade, the snow behind them, first blazing—the only strong light in the picture—then in shade, dark against the pure sky; the grey above, warm and lurid—a little washed with rain in parts; below, a copse of willow coming against the dark purples, nearly pure Indian yellow, a little touched with red. . . ."

Has the reader noted the phrase cited above—"the *statements* in *Modern Painters*"? Nothing angered Ruskin more in later years than to hear himself praised as a "word-painter." It seemed to imply, for one thing, that people read his books more for the sound than for the sense of them; which is the last thing desired by a man with a practical mission. We shall hear of this matter again; but there were other reasons. He objected to be

[1] "Note the instant marking the *pace* of the cloud,—the work of 'Cœli Enarrant' having been begun practically years before this. See below also of the rain-cloud." [J. R. in *Præterita.*]

[2] "This distinct approach, or chase, by rain-cloud is opposed, in my last lectures on sky, to the *gathering* of rain-cloud all through the air, under the influence of plague wind." [*Id.*]

[3] "Palest transparent blue passing into gold." [*Id.*]

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called "word-painter" because what he claimed for his descriptions was scientific exactness. Hence his use of the word "statements" above; just as, in describing the "Snow-storm," he emphasised the significance of the fact that Turner, in an explanatory note in the catalogue, called himself not "the artist" but "the author." Ruskin, like Turner, "felt bound to *record* what he saw." And these diaries illustrate another point. The richness, the glow of colour, even the music of Ruskin's earlier books, were not all artifice, and not at all affectation. They were the natural vehicle of his thought.

All traces of languor disappeared as Ruskin drew near, in May, to Venice. He had as yet seen her only once, and that six years before when he was still a child. The later descriptions in *The Stones of Venice* were to be mingled with a note from passing bells. Something, too, was lost from the romance of the approach when, as in the days of Ruskin's later visits, the city in the sea was connected by the railroad-causeway with the land. But now in 1841 all was the rapture as of an enchanted world—the start from the gate of Padua in the morning; the first sight of Venice as the boat shot into the open lagoon from the canal of Mestre; the gliding past the belfry of St. George of the Sea-weed or the shrine of the Madonna dell' Acqua; the coming of the gondola-beak "inside the door at Danieli's, when the tide was up, and then, all along the canal sides, actual marble walls rising out of the salt sea, with hosts of little brown crabs on them, and Titians inside." And the bliss, too, of the days spent in sketching, when St. Mark's and the Ducal Palace were as yet unrestored! Ruskin recalled some of the rapture in a letter written, forty years on, to his Venetian friend, Count Zorzi:—

"Of all the happy and ardent days which, in my earlier life, it was granted me to spend in this Holy Land of Italy, none were so precious as those which I used to pass in the bright recess of your Piazzetta, by the pillars of Acre; looking sometimes to the glimmering mosaics in the vaults of the Church; sometimes to the Square, thinking of its immortal memories; sometimes to the Palace and the Sea. No such scene existed

elsewhere in Europe,—in the world; so bright, so magically visionary,—a temple radiant as the flowers of nature, venerable and enduring as her rocks, arched above the rugged pillars which then stood simply on the marble pavement, where the triumphant Venetian conqueror had set them." CHAP. V.

"I have found nothing in all Italy comparable to Venice," he wrote at the time to his friend Clayton; "it is insulted by a comparison with any other city of earth or water"; and in his diary (May 8): "Thank God I am here; this and Chamouni are my two homes of earth." Of days spent on the lagoon, there is a recollection in verse in the lines, "La Madonna dell' Acqua," included by Grant Duff in his "Victorian Anthology":—

> "Around her shrine no earthly blossoms blow,
> No footsteps fret the pathway to and fro;
> No sign nor record of departed prayer,
> Print of the stone, nor echo of the air;
> Worn by the lip, nor wearied by the knee,—
> Only a deeper silence of the sea. . . ."

But his days at Venice were mostly spent in sketching and in watching, and there are many entries in the diary, such as this (the italics and the exclamation marks were added when he was reading over the notes in after years):—

(*May* 12.) "When I left the square—before the sunset—at it rather—there was a light such as Turner *in his maddest moments never came up to!!* It turned the masts of the frigate into absolute pointed fire, and the woods of the Botanic Gardens took it in the same say—not as if it were light *on* them, but *in* them; it was impossible to believe it was not autumn; and the brick buildings far over the lagoon blazing in fine crimson. When it left the earth and got into the sky it turned it as usual into the purple grey with red touches; but one effect new to me was a stray ray which caught vertically on a misty rain-filled cloud, and turned it into a perpendicular pillar of crimson haze like the column that led the Israelites."

It was an attack on some of Turner's "mad" visions of Venice that was presently to rouse Ruskin to action; and

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the studies of light which he was now making were to be greatly useful to him.

From Venice, Ruskin travelled by Milan and Turin to Susa, and over the Pass of Mont Cenis. The air of the Campagna and the artificial excitement of new scenes and interests, had probably been just what his physical state did not require; but the Alpine cure for cases such as his had not then been discovered. Among the mountains he recovered at once health and spirits. His first morning among the hills after the long months in Italy, he accounted a turning-point in his life:—

"I woke from a sound tired sleep in a little one-windowed room at Lans-le-bourg, at six of the summer morning, June 2nd 1841; the red aiguilles on the north relieved against pure blue—the great pyramid of snow down the valley in one sheet of eastern light. I dressed in three minutes, ran down the village street, across the stream, and climbed the grassy slope on the south side of the valley, up to the first pines. I had found my life again;—all the best of it. What good of religion, love, admiration or hope, had ever been taught me, or felt by my best nature, rekindled at once; and my line of work, both by my own will and the aid granted to it by fate in the future, determined for me. I went down thankfully to my father and mother, and told them I was sure I should get well."

Ruskin might have said very literally with the Psalmist: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help." The return of buoyancy led to good resolutions at Geneva a few days later:—

"*June* 6.—Pouring rain all day, and slow extempore sermon from a weak-voiced young man in a white arched small chapel, with a braying organ and doggerel hymns. Several times, about the same hour on Sunday mornings, a fit of self-reproach has come upon me for my idling at present, and I have formed resolutions to be always trying to get knowledge of some kind or other, or bodily strength, or some real, available, continuing good, rather than the mere amusement of the time. It came on

me to-day very strongly, and I would give anything and everything to keep myself in the temper, for I always slip out of it next day." CHAP. V.

II

Ruskin returned to England from his long tour in search of health at the end of June, and after some weeks at home was sent to complete his cure under Dr. Jephson at Leamington. There Ruskin settled down to various studies—reading the *Poissons Fossiles* of Agassiz, trying to paint vignettes in imitation of Turner, writing bits of his own *King of the Golden River*. Occupations desultory enough, but not without an incidental value, he came to think. For at Leamington he learnt at least, he tells us, that it "avails nothing to call by their right names every scale stuck in the mud of the universe," and that he could not compose a picture, or write a story. Another salutary discovery is recorded in the gloss upon the last of the three following entries in his diary, made before he went to Leamington :—

"*July 6th*, '41.—Dined with Turner, Jones, and Nesfield at Griffith's yesterday. Turner there is no mistaking for a moment—his keen eye and dry sentences can be the signs only of high intellect. Jones a fine, grey, quiet, Spectator-like 'gentleman.'

"*July 9th*.—Croly, Stewart (John Stewart, a somewhat conceited old Scotch friend), Campbell (I forget who), and Harrison at dinner. Stewart, speaking of Lord Melbourne, said he was a man who always said what he thought. 'Well, what is it?' asked Croly.

"*July* 12.—Want to finish B. C." ("Broken Chain") "this week if I can." (A blessed entry—it was the last poetry I ever wrote, under the impression of having any poetical power.)

What, then, to do next? The two sides of his nature and of his training seemed to point in different directions. He was not as yet minded definitely to renounce the Church as a profession, but he was counting with wistful regret the sacrifice of other interests which its adoption would involve—interests towards which also he felt a moral call. His friend Clayton, with whom he had been used to exchange

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views on artistic and literary subjects, had by this time taken Holy Orders; and Ruskin wrote to him: "I am studying with Harding for foliage and he gives me a great deal to do; but I suppose I can be of no further use to you, you have cut all these things. Must I, when I follow you?" He laid his perplexities before his old school-master:—

(*To* CANON DALE.) "LEAMINGTON, *Sept.* 22.—MY DEAR SIR,—I have just received your most kind letter, and sit down instantly to reply, with sincere thanks for your permission to write to you at length. Scripture, of course, must be the ultimate appeal, but what I have to say at present is, I think, founded on no solitary passages, but on the broadest and first doctrines of our religion. . . . Nero's choice of time and opportunity for the pursuit of his musical studies has been much execrated, but is guiltless in comparison to the conduct of the man who occupies himself for a single hour with any earthly pursuit of whatever importance, believing, as he must, if he believe the Bible, that souls, which human exertion might save, are meanwhile dropping minute by minute into hell. This being fully granted, the questions come, 'What means are there by which the salvation of souls can be attained?' and 'How are we to choose among them?' For instance, does the pursuit of any art or science, for the mere sake of the resultant beauty or knowledge, tend to forward this end? That such pursuits are beneficial and ennobling to our nature is self-evident, but have we leisure for them in our perilous circumstances? Is it a time to be spelling of letters, or touching of strings, counting stars or crystallising dewdrops, while the earth is failing under our feet, and our fellows are departing every instant into eternal pain? Or, on the other hand, is not the character and kind of intellect which is likely to be drawn into these occupations, employed in the fullest measure and to the best advantage in them? Would not great part of it be useless and inactive if otherwise directed? Do not the results of its labour remain, exercising an influence, if not directly spiritual, yet ennobling and purifying, on all humanity, to all time? Was not the energy of Galileo, Newton, Davy, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Handel, employed more effectively to the glory of God in the results and lessons it has left, than if it had been

occupied all their lifetime in direct priestly exertion, for which, in all probability, it was less adapted and in which it would have been comparatively less effectual?

"Yet if the labours of men like these, who spread the very foundations of human knowledge to twice their compass, may be considered as tending to the great end of salvation, can the same be said of those who follow their footsteps with the average intellect of humanity?

"Is an individual, then, who has the power of choice, in any degree to yield to his predilections in so important a matter? I myself have little pleasure in the idea of entering the Church, and have been attached to the pursuits of art and science, not by a flying fancy, but as long as I can remember, with settled and steady desire. How far am I justified in following them up?"

What answer was sent by Canon Dale to assist his pupil in resolving the doubt between these conflicting calls, I do not know; but Ruskin's own answer to it is written large in his life and work. He made the critic's chair a pulpit.

Meanwhile there was one duty of the moment to be discharged, whichever path was afterwards to be chosen. He had still to take his degree at Oxford; in the autumn he settled quietly at home, and Osborne Gordon came to read with him. The lessons from Harding which went on concurrently had an important influence. On the technical side, Ruskin learnt much from his drawing-master's knowledge and faithful study of tree form; their discussions must have helped the pupil also towards making his final choice, and Harding's influence may be traced in some of Ruskin's critical views. For Harding was a man of deeply religious temperament, and he was also a violent hater of the old Dutch school of bituminous landscape and tavern scenes. Harding's authority may well have lent some emphasis to the terms in which, a year later, Ruskin was to inveigh against "the various Van somethings and Back somethings, more especially and malignantly those who have libelled the sea." The interruption in his academical studies caused Ruskin to give up the idea of reading for "Honours"; and even so, he was not sure of passing. "I can't write Latin," he

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said to Clayton, "I am nervous." But the examiners forgave his shaky Latinity because the divinity, philosophy, and mathematics were all above the average. "Ruskin is a wonderful example," says one who speaks from long and intimate experience of Oxford examinations, "of the ennoblement of Pass work by a strong and ready intelligence. In my time I have known three men on whom the old Pass education really had excellent effects: Lord Salisbury, Lord Dufferin, and Ruskin. They all brought to it a generosity of mind and breadth of experience which raised them above the work they had to do. Ruskin at the end showed so much work and brilliancy in his final examination, that he was placed in the Class List on his Pass work; his name appears as a Double Fourth Class-man, that is, an Honorary Class-man in both Classics and Mathematics. It was a very rare distinction."[1] The elaboration of classes and categories in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the search for philosophic first principles, the references to Aristotle and Locke, show the influence of his Oxford studies.

III

Ruskin took his degree in the summer-term of 1842, and once more the question came, What to do next? "There I was," he says, "at three-and-twenty, with such and such powers, . . . such and such likings, hitherto indulged rather against conscience; and a dim sense of duty to myself, my parents, and a daily more vague shadow of Eternal Law." He was under no constraint to earn his own living or make his own way. His mother still clung to her hopes of the Church; his father, "utterly indulgent," was ready to let him do anything—convinced that in one way or another, as Bishop, or as a poet, or as an artist, he would win distinction in the world. Ruskin decided, as the easiest and pleasantest thing to do for the moment, that they should all set out for Chamouni once more. The destinies were shaping a course for him; but his own immediate impulse, in planning

[1] Dean Kitchin, *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, p. 30.

this tour of 1842, was geological. "I spent a week," he says, "in Somerset House drawing a geological map of the route on a large scale from the maps of the Geological Society," and he had long desired an opportunity of examining accurately the rocks of Mont Blanc. Other influences, however, had been at work which were to give special importance to the tour.

In the spring of 1842 he had been one of the few connoisseurs privileged to see a set of sketches, from which Turner proposed to make finished drawings under quite other conditions than those which he had previously accepted or insisted upon. The sketches, being a few of an almost infinite number made by the artist in his later Continental wanderings, may now for the most part be seen in the National Gallery. They belong to the group which Ruskin afterwards called "delight drawings"—drawings, that is, made not for exhibition or even for sale, but for the artist's own pleasure and delight. None of Turner's drawings are now more admired, and the history of some of them illustrates in a striking way the change which has taken place in the public estimate of the monetary value of the artist's genius—a change due, in what measure, who shall say, to Ruskin's influence? In 1842, then, Turner selected fifteen sketches from his rolls; from ten of these he proposed to make finished drawings, and he offered the choice to his public. Of these ten, he made anticipatorily four, as signs, as it were, of his re-opened shop, and he placed them together with the fifteen sketches in the hands of Griffith, the dealer, to get what orders he could. Turner had expected to clear 1000 guineas by the work; but Griffith reported that he could not get more than 80 guineas for a drawing, and there was the commission to come out of that. So Turner agreed to sell sixteen if orders could be got. But purchasers were backward; only nine could be placed; Turner consented with a growl, and threw in a tenth drawing for the dealer's commission. One of the four anticipatory drawings was the "Splügen," specially liked by Turner himself. Ruskin saw it in an instant to be "the noblest Alpine drawing Turner had ever made till then"; but his father

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was travelling for orders at the time, the son did not press the point in his absence, and by the time he returned, the Splügen had been bought by Munro of Novar. Three others of these delight-drawings Ruskin was allowed by his father to buy; and one of them, Lucerne Town, Ruskin sold many years later for £1000. "I wished," he explains, "to get *dead* Turner for one drawing his own original price for the whole ten." The missing of the Splügen long rankled, and was a thorn in the sides of father and son all their lives. It was one of the little tragedies in their relations, which will meet us in a more poignant form presently, that the son never fully explained his feelings till it was too late, and that the father, though "utterly indulgent" in the main, often thwarted his son's purposes. The Turner drawings of 1842, now so highly valued, hung fire, it will be seen, at the time. They were "not in his usual style," the connoisseurs complained. They were not: but Ruskin felt that the new style was even better than the old. In these drawings he saw examples, in Turner's highest power, of a landscape-art which owes nothing to traditional rules of composition, but attains, after long study of nature, to impressions of her inmost truth and spirit.

His outlook upon art and nature was deepened from another side by a "discovery" which he made at this time from his own experience. Hitherto he had sought, in sketching, for effects and views of specially romantic character: he had looked at nature, also, through the eyes of Prout or Turner, and had tried to compose in their way. But one day, in the spring of 1842, he noticed, on the road to Norwood, "a bit of ivy round a thorn stem, which seemed, even to my critical judgment, not ill 'composed.'"[1] The lesson thus learnt—the lesson of thinking nothing common or unclean, and of seeking beauty through truth—was reinforced later in the year in the forest of Fontainebleau, when he found himself "lying on the bank of a cart-road in the sand, with no prospect whatever but a small aspen tree against the blue

[1] I have been unable to discover whether this study, of so much interest in Ruskin's life, still exists. It may possibly have been the original of a plate inserted in the Library Edition, vol. iii. p. 338.

sky. Languidly, but not idly, I began to draw it; and as I drew, the languor passed away: the beautiful lines insisted on being traced. . . . With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they 'composed' themselves by finer laws than any known of men. . . . 'He hath made everything beautiful in his time,' became for me thenceforward the interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things; and I returned along the wood-road feeling that it had led me far." It was to lead him to *Modern Painters*. The impression made upon him at the time by his new interest in simple studies from nature appears in a letter of this date to Clayton :—

"Time was (when I began drawing) that I used to think a picturesque or beautiful tree was hardly to be met with once a month; I cared for nothing but oaks a thousand years old, split by lightning or shattered by wind, or made up for my worship's edification in some particular and distinguished way. *Now*, there is not a twig in the closest-clipt hedge that grows, that I cannot admire, and wonder at, and take pleasure in, and learn from. I think one tree very nearly as good as another, and all a thousand times more beautiful than I once did my picked ones, but I admire *those* more than I could then, tenfold."

Ruskin's arms were now ready; only the call to battle remained to come. At Geneva, in the same church as in the preceding year (p. 120), the same fit of self-reproach, the same resolve to be up and doing, came upon him. It was, as he noted in his diary a few months later, "the origin of Turner work." The immediate impulse was the same as in the case of the Essay of 1836; for at Geneva a review of the Royal Academy's Exhibition of 1842, ridiculing Turner's pictures of the year, reached him. He had seen the pictures before leaving England, and had admired them no less than the delight-drawings. The review was probably that in the *Literary Gazette* or the *Athenæum*, both of which papers W. H. Harrison was in the habit of sending to Ruskin or his father. Some extracts are worth giving as showing the kind of criticism against which the first volume

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of *Modern Painters* was directed. The *Literary Gazette* wrote:—

"No. 52, 'The Dogano' (*sic*), and 73, 'Campo Santo,' have a gorgeous *ensemble*, and produced by wonderful art, but they mean nothing. They are produced as if by throwing handfuls of white, and blue, and red, at the canvas, letting what chanced to stick, stick; and then shadowing in some forms to make the appearance of a picture. And yet there is a fine harmony in the highest range of colour to please the sense of vision; we admire, and we lament to see such genius so employed. But 'Farther on you may fare worse.' No. 182 is a Snow-storm of most unintelligible character—the snow-storm of a confused dream, with a steamboat 'making signals,' and (apparently, like the painter who was in it) 'going by the head' [*sic*: the word was of course lead]. Neither by land or water was such a scene ever witnessed. No. 338, 'Burial at Sea': though there is a striking effect, still the whole is so idealised and removed from truth, that instead of the feeling it ought to effect, it only excites ridicule. And No. 353 caps all before for absurdity, without even any of the redeeming qualities in the rest. It represents Buonaparte,—facetiously described as 'the exile and the rock-limpet,' standing on the seashore at St. Helena. . . . The whole thing is so truly ludicrous, that the *risum teneatis* even of the Amici is absolutely impossible."

The *Athenæum* was more ribald. Only by contemplation of Creswick's delicious landscape, it seems, could the spectator be prepared for the painful effect of Turner:—

"This gentleman has on former occasions chosen to paint with cream, or chocolate, yolk of egg, or currant jelly,—here he uses his whole array of kitchen stuff. . . . We cannot fancy the state of eye, which will permit any one cognizant of Art to treat these rhapsodies as Lord Byron treated 'Christabel'; neither can we believe in any future revolution, which shall bring the world round to the opinion of the worshipper, if worshipper such frenzies still possess."

With such criticisms ringing in his ears as a call to action, Ruskin went on to Chamouni, hoping to say what was burning in his heart and mind within the limits of a

pamphlet. But at Chamouni he became engrossed "with snow and granite." And the more he considered, the larger grew the enterprise. The scheme for a pamphlet became one for a treatise. The defence of Turner was, therefore, postponed for autumn work at home.

Of the tour of 1842, and of the studies at Chamouni immediately preparatory to the first volume of *Modern Painters*, no diary is now extant; perhaps little or none was written. His "feelings and discoveries" of this year were, he says, "too many and too bewildering to be written"; but letters to his friends tell us something of the rapture:—

(*To the* Rev. W. L. Brown.) "Chamouni, *Aug.* 1842.—Chamouni is such a place! There is no sky like its sky. . . . There is no air like its air. Coming down from Chamouni into the lower world is like coming out of open morning air into an ale-house parlour where people have been sleeping and smoking with the door shut all night; and for its earth, there is not a stick nor a stone in the valley that is not toned with the majestic spirit; there is nothing pretty there, it is all beautiful to its lowest and lightest details, bursting forth below and above with such an inconceivable mixture of love and power—of grace with glory—its dews seem to ennoble, and its storms to bless; and with all the constant sensations of majesty from which you never can escape, there is such infinite variety of manifestation, such eternal mingling of every source of awe, that it never oppresses, though it educates you. Nor can you ever forget for an instant either the gentleness or the omnipotence of the ruling Spirit. Though the whole air around you may be undulating with thunder, the rock under which you are sheltered is lighted with stars of strange, pure, unearthly flowers, as if every fissure had had an angel working there all spring; and if the sky be cloudless, and you bury your head in a bank of gentians, and forget for an instant that there is anything round you but gentleness and delight, you are roused by the hollow crash of the advancing glacier, or the long echoing fall of some bounding rock, or the deep prolonged thrilling murmur of a far-off avalanche, which would be sounds of Death if they were not in Regions of Death."

(*To* W. H. Harrison.) "Chamouni, *June* 20.—If I have not

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followed *every* suggestion you have made, it is only because I am so occupied in the morning—and so tired at night—with snow and granite, that I cannot bring my mind into a state capable of taking careful cognizance of anything of the kind. I cannot even try the melody of a verse, for the Arve rushes furiously under my window—mixing in my ear with even *imaginary* sound, and every moment of time is so valuable—between mineralogy and drawing—and getting ideas;—for not an hour, from dawn to moonrise, on any day since I have been in sight of Mont Blanc, has passed without its own peculiar—unreportable—evanescent phenomena, that I can hardly prevail upon myself to snatch a moment for work on verses which I feel persuaded I shall in a year or two almost entirely re-write, as none of them are what I wish, or what I can make them in time."

The letter to Harrison may have accompanied the "Walk in Chamouni" which appears among Ruskin's poems, and of which a line or two may be given:—

> "That thrill of gushing wind and glittering rain
> Onward amid the woodland hollows went;
> And bade by turns the drooping boughs complain
> O'er the brown earth, that drank in lightless stain
> The beauty of their burning ornament."

Creditable lines, enough; but the real Ruskin appears not in them, but rather in the prose of the letter to Brown. It was in *Modern Painters*, not in any re-writing of the verses, that Ruskin was to show what he could make of the impressions received at Chamouni. There during the summer months he studied the "Aiguilles and their Friends." On days of blue unclouded weather, he climbed the hills and explored the glaciers with his Savoy guide; or pondered among the gentians and the Alpine roses; or sketched in the Happy Valley. On days of rain, he would sort or sketch his minerals and flowers, or make studies of tree-structure. From Chamouni he travelled home by the Rhine and Flanders, and set himself down in his little study at Herne Hill to write in the full enthusiasm of youth the first volume of *Modern Painters*.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST VOLUME OF *MODERN PAINTERS*

(1843)

> "You will not be uninterested to hear that Mr. Sydney Smith (no mean authority in such cases) spoke in the highest terms of your son's work, on a public occasion, and in presence of several distinguished literary characters. He said it was a work of transcendent talent, presented the most original views, and the most elegant and powerful language, and would work a complete revolution in the world of taste. He did not know, when he said this, how much I was interested in the author."—CANON DALE to Ruskin's father.

THE first volume of the famous book, of which Sydney Smith thus spoke to Ruskin's tutor, and which was to take the literary world by storm, was an octavo in 450 pages, and was written, so far as the actual composition was concerned, in eight months. But, as my earlier chapters have shown, Ruskin had, in another sense, been writing the book for many years, and had been educating himself for it, in literature, in art, and in nature, from his earliest youth. His reading, if discursive, had been deep. He was saved, alike by his own temperament and by broken health, from the dangers of cram. He read to learn, rather than to pass examinations. He had practised himself in the art of writing for years. From his youth, too, as he stated in the preface of his book, he had been "devoted to the laborious study of practical art." His descriptions and analyses of Turner's art were founded on long practice in copying the master's drawings, and in making studies from his pictures. We have followed the author, too, in the travels to which he referred when he added that his criticisms of the old schools of landscape-painting were "founded on familiar acquaintance with every important work of art, from Antwerp to

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Naples." It was, however, his long apprenticeship to Nature that enabled this young man to write with so much assurance. "I should not have spoken so audaciously," he said at the time to Liddell, "had I not been able to trace, in my education, some grounds for supposing that I might in deed and in truth judge more justly of Turner than others can. I mean, my having been taken to mountain scenery when a mere child, and allowed, at a time when boys are usually learning their grammar, to ramble on the shores of Como and Lucerne; and my having since, regardless of all that usually occupies the energies of the traveller,—art, antiquities, or people,—devoted myself to pure, wild, solitary, natural scenery; with a most unfortunate effect, of course, as far as general or human knowledge is concerned, but with most beneficial effect on that peculiar sensibility to the beautiful in all things that God has made, which it is my present aim to render more universal." The same justification for his confidence is expressed in the passage from Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which Ruskin placed on the title-page of every volume, in every edition, of *Modern Painters*:—

> "Accuse me not
> Of arrogance, ...
> If, having walked with Nature,
> And offered, far as frailty would allow,
> My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
> I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
> Whom I have served, that their Divinity
> Revolts, offended at the ways of men,
> Philosophers, who, though the human soul
> Be of a thousand faculties composed,
> And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
> This soul, and the transcendent universe,
> No more than as a mirror that reflects
> To proud Self-love her own intelligence."

"He has just gone," wrote his father on one occasion, "from a hurried dinner to the sunset which he visits as regularly as a soldier does his evening parade." He was young in years; but already he had long "walked with

Nature," and offered his heart "a daily sacrifice to Truth." He sat down to his task, then, not only with the fire of a pamphleteer, eager to do battle for Turner, but with the zeal also of a prophet, bent upon explaining the works of God to man. CHAP. VI.

I

His home surroundings were favourable to his work. A London suburb is a humdrum place, certainly, after Chamouni; yet nowhere, as Mr. Pater says, "are things more apt to respond to the brighter weather, nowhere is there so much difference between rain and sunshine, nowhere do the clouds roll together more grandly." And Herne Hill was in those days at the edge of the open country. *Modern Painters* could never have been written, Ruskin used to say in later years, except in the purer air of fifty years since. In October 1842 the Ruskin household was moved to the larger house and grounds on Denmark Hill (No. 51). Here Ruskin's study, on the first floor, looked on to "the lawn and further field"; while the window of his bedroom above, looking straight south-east, "gave command of the morning clouds, inestimable for its aid in all healthy thought." In Croxted Lane, then a green by-road passing through hedgerows, "my mother and I," says Ruskin, "used to gather the first buds of the hawthorn; and there, in after years, I used to walk in the summer shadows, as in a place wilder and sweeter than our garden, to think over any passage I wanted to make better than usual in *Modern Painters*." And, for his special art work, Ruskin was otherwise well placed. He had Dulwich Gallery close by, for examples of the ancients; and for Turner, he had not only the run of the master's own gallery in Queen Anne Street; but, nearer home, the collection of Mr. Bicknell at Herne Hill freely open to him, and the yet richer one of Mr. Windus within an easy journey at Tottenham. At Norwood, too, within a walk of Denmark Hill, was Mr. Griffith, the picture-dealer, who had first introduced Ruskin to Turner, and in whose house pictures and drawings by the artist were always to be seen. Entries selected from the diary for 1843 afford

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a glimpse of the author at work, showing his diverse interests and enthusiasms, and recording the progress of his composition:—

"*Jan.* 19.—Yesterday with Richard [Fall] to Geological. . . . To-day pleasant lesson from Harding, and got some valuable notes at Royal Academy; but late to-night, and must be up to organize in the morning.

"*Jan.* 24.—I am getting quite dissipated—out at Drury Lane last night. Macready in *Macbeth*, wretched beyond all I had conceived possible; quite tired and bored, but [Osborne] Gordon liked it. . . .

"*Jan.* 25. . . . Walked down to Zoological Gardens, and had a pleasant saunter with Gordon. Many new animals; I think I shall manage to go there oftener. Curious essay of Newman's I read some pages of—about the ecclesiastical miracles: full of intellect, but doubtful in tendency. I fear insidious, yet I like it.

"*Jan.* 26.—Pleasant evening with Gordon and his sister and Richard, but little done. Sauntered with him into Dulwich Gallery, and wrote a little, and drew badly. The days get long apace, however, and my work is beginning to assume form.

"*Jan.* 27.—Gordon left us to-day, and I miss him very much—kind fellow, and clever as kind. Took him into town, and called on Turner; found him in, and in excellent humour, and will come to me on my birthday.

"*Feb.* 8.—The happiest birthday evening save one I ever spent in my life. Turner happy and kind; all else fitting and delightful. . . ."

Turner, it will be seen, was already on terms of friendship in Ruskin's home; and these dinner parties on his birthday introduced him to many other artists of the day. "If," he says, "the painters cared to say anything of pictures, they knew they would be understood; if they chose rather to talk of sherry, my father could, and would with delight, tell them more about it than any other person knew in either England or Spain."

"*Feb.* 9.—I wish my work went as the days do; I am terribly behind. All day long in town to-day, and bothered in the

Nat. Gall.—quite certain of the villainousness of the pictures, but difficult to prove. CHAP. VI.

"*Feb.* 10. . . . Nothing done beyond a single chapter to-day.

"*Feb.* 21.—It is strange—I work and work and cannot get on; had to rewrite a whole chapter to-day. But I had a lovely walk—mild sun and baking wind—and I got to the snowdrifts where they still lay deep and pure, and glowed in the sun as if they had been on the Alps; and the dogs went half out of their wits with delight, rolling and kicking in it, and throwing it over each other. What a lovely thing a bit of a fine, sharp, crystallized snow is, held up against the blue sky, catching the sun! Talk of diamonds!

"*Feb.* 24. . . . Called at Turner's . . . insisted on my taking a glass of wine, but I wouldn't; excessively good-natured to-day. Heaven grant he may not be mortally offended with the work!"

Then the diary breaks off, as the work for the press became more instant:—

"*May* 1.—Couldn't write while I had this work for Turner to do; had not the slightest notion what labour it was. I was at it all April from 6 morning till 10 night, and late to-night too—but shall keep on, I hope."

II

The first volume of *Modern Painters* was published in the first week of May 1843. Ruskin was then just twenty-four years of age. The author's youth was the reason of his concealing his personality under the description "A Graduate of Oxford"—"sure," he says, "of the truth of what I wrote, but fearing that I might not obtain fair hearing, if the reader knew my youth." This was a counsel of prudence—as also the adoption of a *nom de plume* for *The Poetry of Architecture*—which Ruskin owed to his father. The concealment was at first well sustained; even college tutors and friends were unaware of the author's identity. Like the author of *Waverley*, he practised some little mystification upon them. George Richmond, Ruskin notes in his diary (May 15), "Seems to have no idea at present it can be

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mine." In writing to Prout, Ruskin kept up for a while a veil of anonymity; and, in putting it aside, explained the reason for the disguise.

"*Feb.* 9, 1844. . . . I am tired of keeping up forms with *you;* in fact there are many who must *know* me and my doings with whom I do, so long as it is possible, in order that they may be able to deny knowledge of the matter when questioned, and it is *very* important that the book should not be generally known to be written by a young man. I must entreat the favour of your keeping the secret. You may perhaps imagine it is pretty generally known—not so. You see the *Athenæum* regrets that my age is *not* as green as my judgment. I know its editor and several others are quite on a wrong scent; so pray be cautious. Don't tell even best friends. I wouldn't *you* if I could help it, but I cannot receive your advice and ask for it comfortably in a third name. Every new clue must take away from my power of doing good."

There is one thing harder, it has been said, than to write a good book, and that is to find a good title for it. The history of Ruskin's most famous book is a case in point. His own idea was to call the book *Turner and the Ancients.* To this, however, the publishers objected, and to them the title *Modern Painters* was due. Ruskin, however, was not entirely deprived of his Turner and the Ancients, for, in the original edition, the title-page was well filled as follows:—*Modern Painters: Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to all the Ancient Masters proved, by Examples of the True, the Beautiful and the Intellectual, from the Works of Modern Artists, especially from those of J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R.A.* The long title was a fairly accurate description of the argument of the book, but it was very cumbersome. In later editions Ruskin called it *Modern Painters* simply, and he must have become pleased with the title, since for many years he used to describe himself as "The author of *Modern Painters.*" But the title is in some sort a misnomer after all. The book does, it is true, assert the superiority in the art of landscape-painting of one modern painter (Turner) to all the ancient masters, and it asserts the superiority of a

group of modern painters to a group of older painters, but it does not assert the inferiority of all the ancient masters. On the contrary, in the very forefront of the book (the preface to the 2nd edition), as in many a page of later volumes, the practice of the more ancient painters (of Italy) is appealed to as against that of the less ancient (the Dutch and the French). I have sometimes seen all this cited as an instance of Ruskin's "inconsistency." It is nothing but an instance of the difficulty of finding an entirely satisfactory short title. In "*Modern*" *Painters* he compared, as he has elsewhere explained, "the work of living artists with that of so-called 'old' masters of landscape who flourished for the most part in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries." Why he selected these latter for comparison, we shall hear presently. I must first complete the story of the publication of the book.

Modern Painters is one of the many great books which a publisher refused. Ruskin's father, who until his death in 1864 acted as his son's literary agent, had in the first instance offered the book to John Murray, without, however, showing him the MS. "He said," wrote J. J. Ruskin to W. H. Harrison, "the public cared little about Turner, but strongly urged my son's writing on the German School, which the public were calling for works on." Murray asked, however, for sight of a sheet. "I thought," continues J. J. Ruskin, "if I sent a sheet, and the work was refused, I should be offering my old friend P. Stewart a rejected book. I therefore declined submitting any sheet, and carried the work at once to Smith & Co." Stewart was a partner in the firm, and Mr. Smith (the elder) magnanimously offered Ruskin's father to induce Murray to take the book. This offer was not accepted, and Smith, Elder & Co. then accepted the proposal to publish the book with alacrity, and thus began Ruskin's close personal connexion with the firm, and more especially with Mr. Smith (the younger), on whose shoulders the whole responsibilities of the business presently devolved. The firm had already had dealings with Ruskin through *Friendship's Offering*, and George Smith was at this time a neighbour on Denmark Hill. "I should like much

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again," wrote Ruskin many years later, when he had transferred his books elsewhere, "to be on terms with my old publisher, and hear him telling me nice stories over our walnuts, after dividing his year's spoil with me in Christmas charity."

Murray's reason for declining *Modern Painters* is of interest as showing the current taste of the time, and the opposing forces which the book had to combat. The public then "cared little for Turner." It has sometimes been supposed that Ruskin introduced Turner to the English public. It is true that the two names will ever be associated, owing to the conjunction whereby the original genius of the artist found in his own day the genius of a critic, no less original, to understand and to interpret him. But Turner had become a Royal Academician nearly twenty years before Ruskin was born. He was famous and wealthy long before Ruskin's book appeared. Ruskin did not discover Turner in the sense that he discovered Carpaccio and re-discovered Tintoret; but he did for him a service even more conspicuous. He rescued him not from obscurity, but from misunderstanding. He was not the first to praise Turner, but he intervened in order that he should be praised rightly. It was, as we have seen, the change to Turner's later manner, and the contemptuous misunderstanding of this change on the part of the critics, that called Ruskin into the fray. "I like his later pictures, up to the year 1845, the best," he explained when re-affirming his faith in Turner a few years later; "and believe that those persons who only like his early pictures, do not, in fact, like him at all. They do *not* like that which is essentially *his*. . . . His entire power is best represented by . . . pictures . . . painted exactly at the time when the public and the press were together loudest in abuse of him."[1] What Ruskin did in the first volume of *Modern Painters* was to stem the tide of war, and in doing so he laid the foundations not only of a better appreciation of a great master, and of broader views of the art of painting, but also generally of saner and more scientific criticism. "Turner's impressions displease us," said the critics of the day; "we have never seen such

[1] *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. (1851), appendix xi.

things; they do not conform to existing rules and traditional conventions." Ruskin's was the more modern attitude. He discarded authority and looked to principle. "What does the artist mean?" he asked; "what laws does he exemplify? what is he driving at?" The essential merit, the originality, the permanent value of Ruskin's book lay not in its rhapsodies, but in its reasoning. It was a work not primarily of sentiment, but rather of scientific criticism. As such it requires close attention, to be understood aright, for it deals with difficult problems and draws many subtle distinctions. It found such a reader in Robertson of Brighton, who wrote thus of the book :—

"I rejoice that you have taken up Ruskin; only let me ask you to read it very slowly, to resolve not to finish more than a few pages each day. One or two of the smaller chapters are quite enough—a long chapter is enough for two days, except where it is chiefly made up of illustration from pictures; those can only be read with minute attention when you have the print or picture to which he refers you; and those which you can so see, in the National Gallery, Dulwich, etc., you should study, with the book, one or two at a time. The book is worth reading in this way: study it—think over each chapter, and examine yourself mentally, with shut eyes, upon its principles, putting down briefly on paper the heads, and getting up each day the principles you gained the day before. This is not the way to read many books, but it is the way to read much; and one read in this way, carefully, would do more good, and remain longer fructifying, than twenty ski med. Do not read it, however, with slavish acquiescence; with deference, for it deserves it, but not more. And when you have got its principles woven into the memory, hereafter, by comparison and consideration, you will be able to correct and modify for yourself."[1]

Not every reader takes this trouble. Ruskin's art-teaching is often judged by a single quotation from his first volume—and that a quotation which is incomplete. It is supposed that his whole philosophy of art is summed up in the injunction to painters "to go to Nature in all singleness

[1] Stopford Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, p. 305.

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of heart, . . . rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing." But the injunction is addressed to "young artists," and the passage continues:—

> "Then, when their memories are stored, and their imaginations are fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and gold, give the reins to their fancy, and show us what their heads are made of. We will follow them wherever they choose to lead; we will check at nothing; they are then our masters, and are fit to be so. They have placed themselves above our criticism, and we will listen to their words in all faith and humility; but not unless they themselves have before bowed, in the same submission, to a higher Authority and Master."

Ruskin, it will be seen, did not deny or disparage the value of selective imagination in landscape-painting. What he maintained was that imaginative treatment should be founded on study of nature. Want of truth to nature was what Turner had been accused of; and the truth of Turner was therefore the point which Ruskin laboured in his defence. Truth, that is, of form; not necessarily of topography. A painter may or may not be justified in moving a tree from this place to that: he cannot be justified in making an oak move like "india-rubber."[1] Ruskin, whilst on the one side a preacher of fidelity to nature, was, on the other, a pioneer in what is valuable in the gospel of "impressionism."

Murray's remarks to Ruskin's father suggest another set of considerations which must be remembered if the book is to be understood aright. While the current criticism of the day ridiculed Turner's later manner, "the public called for works of the German School." At that time the scheme for painting the walls of the new Houses of Parliament was on foot: it was to the German painter Cornelius that the British Government first applied. Among British artists, Maclise was the great man of the day. A leading art-critic proclaimed that Lee was a greater

[1] For a typical instance of the misunderstanding of Ruskin's meaning, and for a fuller correction, I may refer to the *Fortnightly Review*, March and April 1900.

painter than Gainsborough. The Italians, and especially the early Italians, were little known. Those, it must be remembered, were days before photography had familiarised the eyes of the general public with Italian masterpieces. "There was no discrimination then," says Holman Hunt, "with artists, more than with the public, that Guido, Parmigiano, and Le Brun, Murillo, Sassoferrato, and such crew, were birds of a different feather to their great idols, so that the name of the princely Urbinite was made to cover all conventional art." In the work of discrimination Ruskin was a pioneer, and in considering the warmth of his invectives it is necessary to remember the contrary opinions which he was assailing. In the field of landscape, the Dutch and the French masters of the seventeenth century were the accepted models. It was by their standard that Turner was found wanting; to clear the ground for Turner, he sought to demolish the others. This led him, no doubt, into some exaggeration of blame and into excess of emphasis. He has been accused—to take an instance typical of many others—of unfairness towards Claude, and it may be that he strained some points unduly against that master. But any one who will take the trouble to read all Ruskin's references will see that he was by no means blind to Claude's merits. It appears, too, from the following letter, that Claude was taken as whipping-boy, and made to receive some blows vicariously:— CHAP. VI.

(*To* Samuel Prout.) "*Dec.* 7, 1843. . . . Your kind interest and gentle expression of regret with respect to the work of my Oxford friend have so much touched him that he begs me, so far as may be in my power, to justify him to you. He is very inconsiderate in what he writes, but I don't think it is from want of feeling; it appears to me to be rather from having too much, and from having been put in a rage by people's admiring the old masters who actually do not see the very qualities which constitute their excellence, while their habit of looking at them exclusively prevents them from forming any idea of that of others. My friend has been much cramped in his work by the fear of injuring living painters. I know that

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the really *sore* point with him is not that *Claude* should be put above Turner, but that *Stanfield* and *Creswick* should. But deliberately to sit down in order to prove the superiority of a man who has made his £100,000, over those who are struggling up the hill, however he might wish to do so, would have been, I think, an ungenerous step. Had Turner been poor and despised, I feel sure that my friend would have left the old masters alone, whatever he may think of them, and endeavoured only to show Turner's superiority to living men. . . . Not that you are to suppose for a moment that my friend has said what he does not think. He *does* think Turner as superior to the old masters as he has said, but he certainly would not have said this so boldly, until he had gained more experience, or perhaps until he was generally acknowledged to be a first-rate judge of the old masters themselves. But no other way was open to him; and he preferred plunging into the forefront of the battle at once, to the safer line of argument which might have done heavy injury to industrious, earnest, and deserving men. . . . You ought to consider further, what most of the critics of the work seem altogether to have overlooked, that it is only the *beginning* of a treatise, that the author hints that he has respect for the feeling of the old masters, but has strictly confined himself in the present volume to matters of *fact*. Not one question of art, properly so called, of beauty, composition, meaning, expression, selection, is touched on in the whole volume. How can you possibly tell what the author may think, or say, of Claude when he comes to these questions? Does his language respecting Giotto, Perugino, or Raffaelle, look like that of a man who has no perception of Ideal qualities? . . ."

As a matter of fact, Ruskin did full justice to Claude's amenity and pensive grace; to the beauty of his skies and the skill and charm of his aërial effects. Ruskin's main work in relation to accepted masters was, however—and necessarily from his point of view—destructive. At the time when he began to write *Modern Painters*, Claude was accounted the prince of all landscape painters and the model of all excellence. Ruskin, in vindicating the greater sweep and depth of Turner's genius, fastened with

the emphasis of an advocate upon the weak points in Claude's artistic and intellectual armoury. By so doing he cleared the ground for a truer appreciation of Claude, as well as of Turner. "I remember upon one occasion," says George Richmond's son, Sir William, "when a tirade of Claude was pouring out of Ruskin's mouth like a cataract, in order that he might put Turner upon a yet higher pedestal, that my father turned sharply to him and said, 'Ruskin, when your criticism is constructive you talk like an angel, when it is destructive you declaim like a demon.'" It is probably a true criticism that Ruskin's judgments upon painters will stand more in what he praised than in what he blamed; but in reading those judgments it is necessary to remember the conditions and circumstances of their delivery.

The attack on popular reputations, the vindication of Turner—"the most triumphant vindication of the kind ever published," says Leslie Stephen[1]—and the establishment of sound principles in criticism, were not the only new things in Ruskin's book. In bringing works of landscape art to the test of nature, he was led into many a golden page of descriptive writing. "His descriptions of nature in reference to art," wrote Sara Coleridge in recommending to a friend "a thick volume by a graduate of Oxford," "are delightful; clouds, rocks, earth, water, foliage, he examines and describes in a manner which shows him to be full of knowledge and that fineness of observation which genius produces." German critics of Ruskin, applying an uncouth term from philosophy, say that he was the great English master of "phenomenology." He recorded, analysed, and compared the appearances of nature, not merely in glowing language, but with scientific precision.[2] Such studies in connexion with art had, when Ruskin began

[1] "John Ruskin," in the *National Review*, April 1900.

[2] For instance: Sir Montagu Pollock in a scientific study of reflexions (*Light and Water*, 1903) has occasion to quote Ruskin freely, and says: "The present writer's own pursuit of the subject, though followed along a somewhat different line, has yet only served to increase his admiration of the great teacher's marvellous insight and power of observation."

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to write, a note of originality. A century earlier Richardson, in describing Clarissa's "fine taste for the pencil," had given as an instance of the powers of his prodigy that "she (untaught) observed when but a child that the Sun, Moon, and stars never appeared at once, and were therefore never to be in one piece." A generation later, Barry, the painter, had explained in a letter to Burke, describing the passage of the Mont Cenis, that they saw the moon five times as big as usual from being so much nearer to it. "But where is your brown tree?" was Sir George Beaumont's question to Constable. Sir George looked at pictures through eyes attuned only to the tone of certain ancient masters. Ruskin gave his readers eyes for the phenomena of nature themselves, and taught them to consider pictures by the light of natural truth.

III

Such are the leading notes by which the first volume of *Modern Painters* made its appeal. Unlike some other famous books, it found its mark quickly. It was "the work of a poet as well as of a painter"; the author showed "great brilliancy of illustration, a thorough analytical mind, a minute observance of nature"; it was "no common mind that could soar above the mists and delusions of traditionary prejudice"; the volume was "a work calculated more than *any other* performance in the language to make men inquire into the nature of these sensations of the sublime, the touching, and the delightful, and to lead them from doubt into knowledge, without feeling the length of a way so scattered over with the flowers of an eloquent, forcible, and imaginative style."[1] Such reviews accurately reflected, as we now know from many Memoirs, the impression made by the book upon the best minds of the time. Among the first to read it was Wordsworth, who regarded Ruskin as "a brilliant writer," and placed the volume in his lending library at Rydal Mount. A copy of the volume lay on Rogers's library table. Tennyson saw it there and was

[1] A further collection of the contemporary reviews of the book may be found in the Library Edition, vol. i. pp. xxxv.–vii.

instantly attracted by it. "Another book I long very much to see," he wrote to Moxon the publisher, "is that on the superiority of the modern painters to the old ones, and the greatness of Turner as an artist, by an Oxford undergraduate, I think. I do not much wish to buy it, it may be dear; perhaps you could borrow it for me out of the London Library or from Rogers." Sir Henry Taylor, author of *Philip van Artevelde*, was another early reader of the book, and he passed on its praises to Mr. Aubrey de Vere, begging him to read "a book which seems to me to be far more deeply founded in its criticism of art than any other that I have met with, . . . written with great power and eloquence, and a spirit of the most diligent investigation." Miss Mitford, who afterwards became a dear friend of the author, was another early admirer of *Modern Painters*. She sent word of it to the Brownings in Italy. They were already engaged upon the book, deeply interested, but sometimes acutely disagreeing with its judgments:—

"The letter (wrote Mrs. Browning) in which you mentioned your Oxford student caught us in the midst of his work upon art. Very vivid, very graphic, full of sensibility, but inconsequent in some of the reasoning, it seemed to me, and rather flashy than full in the metaphysics. Robert, who knows a good deal about art, to which knowledge I of course have no pretence, could agree with him only by snatches, and we, both of us, standing before a very expressive picture of Domenichino's (the 'David'—at Fano), wondered how he could blaspheme so against a great artist. Still, he is no ordinary man, and for a critic to be so much of a poet is a great thing. Also, we have by no means, I should imagine, seen the utmost of his stature."

"Hitherto," wrote Miss Brontë, "I have only had instinct to guide me in judging of art; I feel now as if I had been walking blindfold—this book seems to give me eyes. I *do* wish I had pictures within reach by which to test the new sense. Who can read these glowing descriptions of Turner's works without longing to see them? . . . I like this author's style much; there is both energy and beauty in it. I like himself, too, because he is such a hearty admirer. He does

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not give himself half-measure of praise or vituperation. He eulogizes, he reverences with his whole soul." "Ruskin seems to me," she wrote at a later time, "one of the few genuine writers, as distinguished from book-makers of the age. His earnestness even amuses me in certain passages; for I cannot help laughing to think how utilitarians will fume and fret over his deep, serious (and as *they* will think), fanatical reverence for Art. That pure and severe mind you ascribed to him speaks in every line. He writes like a consecrated Priest of the Abstract and Ideal."[1] It was as a prophet that George Eliot came to regard the author of *Modern Painters*. "I venerate him," she wrote, "as one of the great teachers of the day. The grand doctrines of truth and sincerity in art, and the nobleness and solemnity of our human life, which he teaches with the inspiration of a Hebrew prophet, must be stirring up young minds in a promising way."[2] Among the young minds whom the appearance of *Modern Painters* greatly stirred were many who were destined to have influence in their turn on the minds of others. Liddell, afterwards Dean of Christ Church, wrote to Ruskin in 1879:—

"Thirty-six years ago I was at Birmingham, examining the boys in the great school there. In a bookseller's window I saw *Modern Painters, by a Graduate of Oxford*. I knew nothing of the book, or by whom it was written. But I bought it, and read it eagerly. It was like a revelation to me, as it has been to many since. I have it by me—my children have read it; and I think with a pleasure, a somewhat melancholy pleasure, on those long past days."

Jowett, afterwards Master of Balliol, "read it all through," as he wrote to a friend (Dec. 1844), "with the greatest delight; the minute observation and power of description it shows are truly admirable. Since I read it, I fancy I have a keener perception of the symmetry of natural scenery; the book is written by Ruskin, a child of genius

[1] *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, by Mrs. Gaskell, pocket ed., 1889, p. 368; *cf.* pp. 345 and 383.

[2] *George Eliot's Life*, by J. W. Cross, 1885, ii. 7.

certainly." Edward Thring, afterwards headmaster of Uppingham, owed to Ruskin and *Modern Painters* "more of thought and fruitful power than to any other book or any other living man."

The fructifying effect which the first volume of *Modern Painters* exercised on the minds of general readers, it exercised also on many a young artist.[1] The great books, some one has said, are those which come home with a personal appeal, making the reader feel that they were written expressly for him. Such was the effect which Ruskin's book produced upon Holman Hunt in his early days. A fellow-student, he said, "one Telfer—with whom, wherever he wanders, be everlasting peace!—spoke to me of *Modern Painters;* and when he recognised my eagerness to learn of its teachings all he could tell me, he gained permission from Cardinal Wiseman,[2] to whom it belonged, to lend it to me for twenty-four hours. To get through the book I sat up most of the night, and I had to return it ere I made acquaintance with a quota of the good there was in it. But of all its readers none could have felt more strongly than myself that it was written expressly for him. When it had gone, the echo of its words stayed with me, and they gained a further value and meaning whenever my more solemn feelings were touched." It is a thing to cherish in the literary and artistic history of the Victorian era, this picture of the great Pre-Raphaelite painter burning the midnight oil over a borrowed copy of *Modern Painters.* But most of all I like to think of the days at Oxford, as they have been described by a Victorian poet, when William Morris and Burne-Jones and others of their set got at Ruskin's book and Morris would give out favourite passages from the first volume as they have never been given before or since. "He had a mighty singing voice and chanted rather than read those weltering oceans of eloquence. The description of the Slave Ship, or of Turner's skies, with the burden 'Has Claude given this?' were declaimed by him

[1] For Leighton in this connexion, see below, p. 398.

[2] Many references to Ruskin may be found in the Cardinal's *Points of Contact between Science and Art.*

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in a manner that made them seem as if they had been written for no end but that he should hurl them in thunder on the head of the base criminal who had never seen what Turner saw in the sky."[1] From Holman Hunt to Morris and Burne-Jones: thus did the echoes roll from soul to soul. But "we have got past Ruskin and Morris." So Professor Sieper of Munich was told the other day at Cambridge.[2] Beautiful souls! and a fortunate age! if in its onward rush it can afford to discard men of such strength and originality of mind.

The first reception of Ruskin's book in the circle of painters in which he and his father moved was somewhat reserved. "The total group of Modern Painters were," he says, "more startled than flattered by my schismatic praise; the modest ones, such as Fielding, Prout, and Stanfield, felt that it was more than they deserved,—and, moreover, a little beside the mark and out of their way; the conceited ones, such as Harding and De Wint, were angry at the position given to Turner; and I am not sure that any of them were ready even to endorse George Richmond's consoling assurance to my father, that I should know better in time." Among the artists who wrote to Ruskin's father about the book was Samuel Prout. In a letter given in *Præterita*, he is "pleased to find that he has come off beautifully"; and although, to Ruskin himself, Prout seems to have shown some chagrin at first, he afterwards accepted the criticisms of his young friend with gracious modesty. "Would I could exchange twenty old years for twenty new ones," he wrote, "and, with the eyes you have opened, I would be a real 'architectural draughtsman' without resigning my enthusiasm for the picturesque. Your criticism is like the knife of a skilful surgeon, so that, as I am in safe hands, you may cut away without hearing a moan." But what concerned Ruskin most was the attitude of Turner towards his champion. The old painter may have read the book at once, for Ruskin notes in his diary on May 15 (1843): "Called on Turner to-day, who was particularly gracious;

[1] Canon Dixon in Mackail's *Life of William Morris*, vol. i. p. 47.

[2] *A Brief Sketch of the Morris Movement*, 1911, p. 61.

I think he must have read my book, and have been pleased with it, by his tone." But it was not until the following year that Turner said anything. Ruskin's note of the occasion gives a characteristic glimpse of the painter :—

"*October* 20, '44.—I ought to note my being at Windus's on Thursday, to dine with Turner and Griffith alone, and Turner's thanking me for my book for the first time. We drove home together, reached his house about one in the morning. Boy-like, he said he would give sixpence to find the Harley Street gates shut; but on our reaching his door, vowed he'd be damned if we shouldn't come in and have some sherry. We were compelled to obey, and so drank healths again, exactly as the clock struck one, by the light of a single tallow candle in the under room—the wine, by-the-bye, first-rate."

It was not in Turner's nature to say much; it is characteristic again of him that among the things he said on this or some other occasion were, as Ruskin recalled in one of his Oxford lectures, that his champion "didn't know how difficult it is," and had been too hard on his fellow-artists.

IV

Meanwhile the champion had to renew the fight. In the Academy of 1843, which opened at the time that the book appeared, Turner exhibited pictures which Ruskin considered among his finest works—especially the "Sun of Venice going to Sea" and the "St. Benedetto looking to Fusina," both now in the National Gallery. The press was again bitterly hostile. Ruskin notes in his diary :—

"*May* 10 [1843].—Yesterday at Academy . . . Turner greater than he has been these five years."

"*May* 13.—Nothing but ignorant, unmeasured, vapid abuse of Turner in the periodicals. I believe it is spite, for I cannot conceive ignorance so total in any number of men capable of writing two words of English."

Attacks on Turner now became combined with attacks on the prophet. The general reception of *Modern Painters*

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was, as we have seen, favourable; but the old guard of conventional art, the fierce opponents of Turner's later style, led by the *Athenæum* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, were not driven by Ruskin's charge into surrender. The *Athenæum's* reviewer likened Turner's champion to "a whirling Dervish who at the end of his well-sustained reel falls with a higher jump and a shriller shriek into a fit." "What more light-headed rhodomontade," he asked, was ever "scrawled except upon the walls, or halloed except through the wards, of Bedlam?" It was admitted, however, that the author wrote "eloquent skimble-skamble" better than some other professors of the art. *Blackwood* was equally facetious; suggesting also a lunatic asylum as the author's provenance, and ridiculing his language as "very readily learned in the Fudge School."

Ruskin, as he read such attacks, was eager for the fray His father, on the other hand, was distressed by them, and, like a cautious and prudent man of business, was doubtful of the expediency of controversy. At an early period he tried to screen his son from the sight of adverse criticisms; now, the parts were reversed. "We had seen the *Athenæum* before," writes Ruskin to W. H. Harrison. "I do not forward it to my father, simply because the later he is in seeing it, the less time he will have to fret himself about what is to come *next week*. In fact, if by any means he could be got to overlook these things, it would be all the better, for they worry him abominably, and then *he* worries *me*. Do not send anything of the kind in future unless he fishes it out for himself. I believe you know pretty well how much *I* care for such matters." He cared for them only as blows to be returned. "*Blackwood* sends back its petty thunders," wrote his father to W. H. Harrison (Dec. 12, 1843); "I regret to see that in a letter to Rippingille he has given *Blackwood* another thrust. He believes the critic of paintings and writer of the article on *Modern Painters* to be a Rev. Eagles, or some such name, near Bristol."[1] "I am only desirous," writes Ruskin's father

[1] The Rev. John Eagles, author and artist, who had studied in Italy, trying to form his style on Gaspard Poussin and Salvator

again (Jan. 2, 1844), "of keeping my son out of broils or brawls or personalities. He can write on Principles and Theories without meddling with any one—no man becomes distinguished by making enemies, though he may by beating them when made to his hand. I wish him to be playful, not spiteful, towards all opponents." In a reply, Ruskin gave his critics his tit-for-tat. He was at work upon it during the winter of 1843–44. "Put my rod nicely in pickle for *Blackwood*," he writes in his diary on Dec. 29; adding on Jan. 20, "Wish I could get my preface done; cannot write contemptuously enough, and time flies." The preface, with a vigorous reply to his critics, appeared in the second edition which was issued in March 1844, ten months after the first publication of the book.

The authorship was by this time an open secret, and Ruskin was taken up as a literary lion of the season:—

(*To his Father.*) "Denmark Hill, *April* 28, 1844.—I have not time for a letter, as I have been in town till now, and want to get a little work done—but I may just tell you what I have been about. At Sir Robert Inglis's there were: 1st, Mr. Rogers; 2nd, Lord Northampton; 3rd, Lord Arundel; 4th, Lord Mahon; 5th, R. M. Milnes; 6th, 7th, and 8th, two gentlemen whose names I could not catch and a lady; and 9th, Sir J. Franklin, the North Sea man. Monckton Milnes sat next me, and talked away most pleasantly, asking me to come and see him; of course I gave him my own card, and as I was writing the address on it, Rogers called to Milnes over the table. Sir R. said to Milnes, 'Mr. Rogers is speaking to you,' and Rogers said in his dry voice, 'Ask him for —an-other.' Milnes gave him the one I had written, and I replaced it. Afterwards in the passage, Rogers came up to me and took my arm most kindly. 'I don't consider that you and I

Rosa; he was a contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* from 1831 to 1855. That Ruskin's conjecture was correct appears from Mrs. Oliphant's Memoirs of the Blackwoods. She gives a curious letter (no date) from Richard to John Blackwood, suggesting that there should be a second review, conceived in a different style from that of Eagles, and that Ruskin himself should be asked to contribute, as he "had heard he would be a great acquisition to the magazine" (*William Blackwood and his Sons*, 1897, ii. 403).

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have *met* to-day'—(he had been on the other side and near the other end of the table)—'will you come and breakfast with me—Tuesday at 10?' Of course I expressed my gratitude, and then Lord Northampton came up and asked me to come to his soirée this evening, saying he would send me cards for the other nights. I said I could go, though I don't like soirées, but I thought you would have been vexed if I had refused."

(*To* Samuel Rogers.) "Denmark Hill, *May*.—I cannot tell you how much pleasure you gave yesterday; yet, to such extravagance men's thoughts can reach, I do not think I can be quite happy unless you permit me to express my sense of your kindness to you here under my father's roof. Alas! we have not even the upland lawn, far less the cliff with foliage hung, or wizard stream; but we have the spring around us, we have a field all over daisies, and chestnuts all over spires of white, and a sky all over blue. Will you not come some afternoon, and stay and dine with us? I do think it would give you pleasure to see how happy my father would be, and to feel, for I am sure you would feel, how truly and entirely we both honour you with the best part of our hearts, such as it is. And for the rest, I am not afraid, even after so late a visit to St. James's Place, to show you one or two of our Turners, and I have some daguerreotypes of your dear Florence which have in them all but the cicadas among the olive leaves—yes, and some of the deep sea too, in the broad, the narrow streets, which are as much verity as the verity of it is a dream. Will you not come? I have no further plea, though I feel sadly inclined to vain repetition. Do come, and I will thank you better than I can beg of you."

The reader who knows his Rogers will have marked not only familiar lines from the *Italy*, but references to "An Epistle to a Friend." The "pleasure given yesterday" was at the Private View of the Academy, when Rogers made the tour of the pictures with him:—

"*May* 2, 1844.—A memorable day; my first private view of the Royal Academy. I stayed to the very last, and shall scarcely forget the dream-like sensation of finding myself with Rogers the poet—not a soul beside ourselves in the great rooms of the Academy."

Neither praise nor blame diverted Ruskin from the path he had marked out for himself. He fought his hostile critics with a will, and he accepted his recognition gladly. He was conscious of his gifts, but also of his limitations. He was confident because he felt that he had the root of the matter in him but he knew that he was a learner still. The completion of the first portion of his essay was a spur to new studies. They were to lead him into further paths, and to open longer vistas than as yet were within his ken.

CHAPTER VII

STUDIES FOR *MODERN PAINTERS*

(1843–1844)

"Nulla dies sine linea."

FORTUNE, or Destiny—the inscrutable power which Ruskin named, in the title of one of his later books, "Fors Clavigera"—had a large part in the ordering of his works. He learnt as he went on his way; and new experiences, new knowledge, new enthusiasms continually modified his plans. The second volume of *Modern Painters* was not intended, he says, to be in the least like what it ultimately became. Possibly it was intended to complete the book. Certainly he supposed that two or three years would suffice to that end; it was not, however, to be attained till seventeen years had passed. He had discussed in the first volume "ideas of truth" in relation to art; he had next to discuss "ideas of beauty"—to discover, that is, a philosophy of the beautiful, a task which in all ages has been found no less difficult than absorbing.

I

The intricacy of the questions which presented themselves, and the inrush of new knowledge, had a sobering effect on Ruskin as he set himself to the second portion of his essay. He was determined to persevere with his self-appointed mission; but he was resolved, in the continuation of the book, to adopt a less militant tone. The following letters show these two resolves respectively:—

(*To the* Rev. OSBORNE GORDON.) "*March 10th*, 1844. . . . You ask me if the cultivation of taste be the proper 'ergon' of a man's

life. . . . Your expression—cultivation of *taste*—is too vague in two ways;—it does not note the differences between cultivation of one's own taste—and of other people's;—and it leaves open to various interpretations that most vague of all words—taste—which means, in some people's mouths, the faculty of knowing a Claude from a copy, and, in others, the passionate love of all the works of God. Now observe—I am not engaged in selfish cultivation of critical acumen, but in ardent endeavour to spread the love and knowledge of art among all classes;—and secondly, that the love and knowledge I would communicate are not of technicalities and fancies of men, but of the universal system of nature—as interpreted and rendered stable by art;—and, thirdly, observe that all that I hope to be able to do will be accomplished, if my health holds, in two or three years at the very utmost; and then consider whether the years from four to seven and twenty could be, on the whole, much better employed—or *are*, on the whole, much better employed by most men—than in showing the functions, power, and value of an art little understood; in exhibiting the perfection, desirableness, and instructiveness of all features, small or great, of external nature, and directing the public to expect and the artist to intend—an earnest and elevating *moral* influence in all that they admire and achieve.

". . . '*Soit*,' perhaps you will say, 'I give you till twenty-seven to do that, and what will you do next?' Heaven knows! Something assuredly, but I must know my feelings at twenty-seven, before I can tell what. I cannot prepare for it at present, and therefore I need not know what it is to be. I shouldn't be surprised to find myself taking lay orders and going to preach, for a time at least, in Florence or Rome. One thing I shan't do, and that is preach or live in London. But I wish you would, when you have leisure, give me your opinion as to what would be my duty, and in doing so, keep in mind these following characteristics of my mind:—

"First, its two great prevalent tendencies are to mystery in what it contemplates and analysis in what it studies. It is externally occupied in watching vapours and splitting straws (Query, an unfavourable tendency in a sermon).

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"Secondly, it has a rooted horror of neat windows and clean walls (Query, a dangerous disposition in a village).

"Thirdly, it is slightly heretical as to the possibility of anybody's being damned (Q. an immoral state of feeling in a clergyman).

"Fourthly, it has an inveterate hatred of people who turn up the white of their eyes (Q. an uncharitable state of feeling towards a pious congregation).

"Fifthly, it likes not the company of clowns—except in a pantomime (Q. an improper state of feeling towards country squires).

"Sixthly and seventhly, it likes solitude better than company, and stones better than sermons. . . ."

(*To the* Rev. H. G. Liddell.) "*October* 12, 1844.—I was on the very point of writing to beg for your opinion and assistance on some matters of art, when your invaluable letter arrived. I cannot tell you how glad and grateful it makes me; glad for its encouragement, and grateful for its advice. For indeed it is not self-confidence, but only eagerness and strong feeling which have given so overbearing a tone to much of what I have written. . . . I wish there was something in your letter which I could obey without assenting to, that I might prove to you my governability. But alas! there is nothing of all the little that you say in stricture which I do not feel, and which I have not felt for some time back. In fact, on looking over the book the other day, after keeping my mind off the subject entirely for two or three months, I think I could almost have anticipated your every feeling; and I determined on the instant to take in future a totally different tone. . . . I am going to try for better things; for a serious, quiet, earnest, and simple manner, like the execution I want in art. Forgive me for talking of myself and my intentions thus, but your advice will be so valuable to me that I know you will be glad to give it; especially as the matter I have in hand now relates not more to Turner than to that pure old art which I have at last learnt (thanks to you, Acland, and Richmond) to love. . . . So I am working at home from Fra Angelico, and at the British Museum from the Elgins. I don't think with my heart full of Angelico, and my eyes of Titian, that I shall fall into the pamphleteer style again. . . . I shall be, as you will easily conceive, no little time in getting

my materials together. In fact, I have to learn half of what I am to teach." CHAP. VII.

As soon, then, as the first volume of *Modern Painters* was off his hands, Ruskin set to work to learn. The days which he marked as bad in his diary were those on which he had learnt nothing. In 1843 he did not go abroad; he kept the summer term at Oxford; his pursuits at home are described in a letter to a friend:—

(*To the* Rev. E. Clayton.) "*June* 17.—Now, while the Academy is open and I am at home, I have to go into town every day to study Turner; this knocks off much of the forenoon. Then I have to write down what I have learned from him. Then I like every fine day to get a little bit of close, hard study from nature; if not out of doors, I bring in a leaf or plant for foreground and draw that. This necessarily leads me to the ascertaining of botanical names and a little microscopic botany. Then I don't like to pass a day without adding to my knowledge of *historical* painting, especially of the early school of Italy: this commonly involves a little bit of work from Raffaelle, and some historical reading, which brings me into the wilderness of the early Italian Republics, and involves me also in ecclesiastical questions, requiring reading of the Fathers (which, however, I have not entered on yet, but am about to do so) and investigation of the religious tenets and feelings of all the branches of the Early Church. Then a little anatomy is indispensable, and much study of technical matters—management of colours, composition, etc. With all this, which would keep my head a great deal too much upon art, I must have a corrective. This comes in the shape of geology, which necessarily leads me into chemistry, and this latter is not a thing to read a bit of now and then, but requires *hard* reading and much learning by rote; and organic chemistry has made such advances of late that it has become intensely interesting, and draws me on more than it ought. With chemistry and mineralogy, which, though they go together, are totally distinct in the characters (of substances) considered, I am compelled to look at comparative anatomy, especially of fishes, in order to have some acquaintance with the fossil characters of rocks. Then I do not like to give up my Greek altogether, or I should entirely

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forget it. I, therefore, think myself very wrong if I do not read a little bit of Plato very accurately every day; and reading Plato necessarily involves some thought of something more than language. Finally, as in pursuit of the ancient school of religious painting, I must necessarily go to Italy, it is absolutely necessary that I should know Italian well; so that I have to read a little Tasso every day, which I do with difficulty, never having looked at the language till a month or two back; and I cannot suffer myself entirely to forget my French."

He was often, too, at the British Museum, sometimes in the company of his Christ Church friends, Liddell and Newton, studying the marbles, the drawings, the missals. He was learning more than he was writing. The winter (1843–44) passed without seeing the second volume far advanced. His activities, interests and moods, during the first period of work for it, are shown in the following notes from his diary:—

"*Nov.* 20, 1843.—Have done Plato—some Pliny—written a good bit . . . and a little bit of Rio[1]—tolerable day's work—some Italian besides—a walk—and investigation of foliage of Scotch fir.

"*Nov.* 23.—An unprofitable day. I fear I have spoiled my etching plate and didn't write much; pleasant saunter in Dulwich Gallery—read a little Italian—finished first vol. Waagen. Made another study for my vignette; didn't like it; general discouragement, except in seeing of what shabby stuff critics are made. Impressed with the rapidity of an artist's hand in making a sketch from Rubens to-day.

"*Nov.* 25.—A capital day; wrote a first-rate chapter, getting me out of many difficulties; succeeded with my vignette and got an encouraging letter from Armytage,[2]—besides some Italian, Greek, and a little chemistry, and a game of chess.

"*Dec.* 9.—Rather pleasant evening; but nothing learned.

"*Dec.* 28.—Drew a little, but unsatisfactory; wrote notes—and idled. One thing only I have learned, that the common fungus which grows on wet wood is most beautiful and delicate in its sponge-like structure of interior. I must microscope it to-morrow.

[1] See below, p. 168.

[2] The engraver of many plates in *Modern Painters*.

"*Jan.* 3, 1844.—Thought a little over the book, but wrote nothing. I get less and less productive, I think, every day.

"*Jan.* 4.—A bad day. Went over to Cousen;[1] found him infernally dear; put me out. Came back; my father says I must keep to same size as the other volume—floorer No. 2. My mother asked me if I were not getting diffuse—floorer No. 3. . . .

"*Jan.* 10.—Harrison at dinner; young Smith in the evening.[2] Settled not to bring out the work in numbers, and so shall take my leisure. . . .

"*Jan.* 14.—Yesterday a very valuable day; good hard work over painted glass in British Museum. Delicious hour in Turner's gallery. . . .

"*Feb.* 25.—Sunday—a good day because wet. I wish Sunday were always wet, otherwise I lose the day. Read some of Spenser in the morning and learned it; then some of Hooker; did a good deal of divinity.

"*Feb.* 26.—At Ward's, the glass painter's, with Oldfield: my head is quite full of broken bits of colour—madonnas—and crucifixions mixed up with oolitic fossils and shadowy images of the Lorenzo in different lights brooding over all."

The last entry introduces an artistic diversion which occupied much of Ruskin's time and thoughts at this period. Edmund Oldfield had been a fellow-pupil with Ruskin at Mr. Dale's, and he was now a neighbour on Denmark Hill. The artistic tastes of the two young men were known in the parish, and they were commissioned to prepare designs for a window in the new church—St. Giles', Camberwell—which had just been erected in the Early Decorated style by Gilbert Scott. "They seem to desire," writes Ruskin in his diary (May 3), "to put in my design for the window; hope they will like it, if they do, but it will make me very anxious." In the first instance designs for the window-head only were to be submitted. These were prepared by Ruskin and approved by the Committee; but a fresh design by Oldfield was

[1] The engraver of some of the plates in *Modern Painters*.

[2] For Harrison, see above, p. 91. "Young Smith," the late George Murray Smith, was at this time entering upon control of the firm of Smith, Elder & Co.

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substituted for the central light, Ruskin perceiving, as he explains in *Præterita*, that his own "figures adapted from Michael Angelo" were "not exactly adapted to thirteenth-century practice." The window-head was liked, and it was decided to fill the five vertical lights in the same manner. The designing of these, however, Ruskin left to Oldfield, who attained "a delicate brilliancy purer than anything I had before seen in modern glass." But Ruskin, on his travels in the ensuing months, made a close study of the glass in French cathedrals, and sent to Oldfield, in illustrated letters, a constant stream of designs, suggestions, and criticisms. The window is that of the East-end. An interesting essay might be put together from scattered passages in Ruskin's works upon the principles and technique of Painted Glass. Like nearly all of his writings on artistic subjects, these were founded on much study and some practice.

It will be seen from the diaries, quoted above, that the plans for the second volume of *Modern Painters* were at present undecided. He had intended, it seems, to bring out the continuation of his essay in "parts," instead of volumes —a manner of publication, agreeable to his discursive mind, which he adopted, all too frequently, in later years. He intended, also, to illustrate the second volume, and was busily engaged in negotiations with engravers. Ultimately the illustrations were deferred till the third volume, but in anticipation of it the size of the page in the second volume was enlarged. The intention was to confine the essay to the subject of landscape. The central idea of the volume, however—namely, its theory of beauty in relation to the "theoretic" faculty—was with Ruskin from the first, and there was a moment when he experienced what is often an author's worst apprehension—the fear of being forestalled. On November 30 (1843) he says in his diary: "In the *Artist and Amateur* I see a series of essays on beauty commenced which seem as if they would anticipate me altogether." The second essay sufficed, however, to dispel the fear. "Find Rippingille all wrong," he writes on December 30, "in his essay on beauty: shall have the field open."

II

In May, 1844 Ruskin set out with his parents, yet again for Chamouni. The ferment of multifarious interests working in his mind—painted glass, madonnas, geology, and shadowy images of Michael Angelo brooding over all—continued during this tour, and it was as yet by no means certain into what form the fermentation would resolve itself. First they went, that Ruskin might study painted glass, to Rouen, Chartres, Auxerre; then to Dijon and on to Geneva and Chamouni, where Joseph Couttet, "the Captain of Mont Blanc," was engaged as guide. The letters and diary show Ruskin's occupations:— CHAP. VII.

(*To* EDMUND OLDFIELD.) "ROUEN, 18*th May*.—I found no glass at Abbeville—at Eu, the pet church of Louis Philippe has some modern glass, of the worst kind. . . . No glass at Dieppe. But when I got into the Cathedral here this evening, I was grievously vexed with all that I had done, and rendered almost hopeless by the dazzling beauty of form of the windows of the choir. . . . I set myself to consider the difference between the ancient and modern work, which I find chiefly to consist in these points (the design, size, etc., being in all points the same). First, the modern glass admits much more light, producing a glaring and painful impression on the eye, so that I could not look at it long—the old glass soothed, attracted, and comforted the eye, not dazzling it, but admitting of long contemplation without the least pain. On closer examination, I found that the *whites* of the modern glass were very bright, looking like the ground glass of a lamp, and were all inclined to *pink* in their hue; while the whites of the old glass were dead, and wanting in transparency, looking like the ground of a picture (*i.e.* like real *colour*, instead of mere *ground* glass), and that they were all inclined to *green* in their hue. Note this, please, especially. Again, I found that all the blues of the old glass had a *grey* or *black* quality of colour, black stains occurring upon them, so as to make them in places almost opaque, very pure indeed in places, but always tending to grey; whereas the modern blues were much more transparent—like the blues of a druggist's bottles—and instead of tending to grey, tended to *purple*.

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"Again, the yellows of the old glass were always *pale*, passing into grey—sometimes stained with black, the yellows of the modern glass *invariably orange* in a very high degree. Again, the *reds* of the old glass were pure crimson in their general tone, and occasionally so dark as to pass into black, while the reds of the modern glass were invariably a tone more inclined to scarlet, and more pale. Now I want you to go to Ward,[1] and insist especially on this want of *transparency* in the old glass, which it appears to me is a very, *very* important point. I find universally that the eye rests on it as on a quiet picture, while with the modern it is tormented by violence of transmitted light. . . .

"Lastly, I find the iron bars twice as thick in the old glass as in the modern, and running through every bit of the window. If ever Ward gives you a bit of whole glass, four inches over, make him smash it, and stick it together again. I think the putty, or the rust of the iron, gives quality to the edges of the glass."

(*To the same.*) "CHARTRES, *May* 23.—On going again to the cathedral this morning, I was yet more struck with the palpitation of the ground colour. It is to the modern glass what the varying complexion of life is to rouge. . . . The finest windows in colour are three of the twelfth century, in perfect preservation, and their colour is perfectly unique. I never saw anything approaching it, not for depth, but for refinement and purity; and it is their blue which the Labrador felspar resembles. This blue is so luminous that the ruby reds of the window come upon it as distinct *shades*, looking as if it had been spotted with rich blood."

(*Diary.*) "GENEVA, *May* 31.—We arrived here yesterday. . . . The day before I should remember, for the walk I had at St. Laurent; above all, for the phenomenon at sunset which I had never seen till then—of the sun's image reflected from a bank of clouds above the horizon, for at least a quarter of an hour after he had set. It had all the brilliancy of a reflection in water, and if I had not seen the sun set, I should have taken it for the sun itself. A point of greatest intensity was on the edge of the cloud, but it shot up a stream of splendid light far towards the zenith, as well s downwards towards the sun."

(*To* EDMUND OLDFIELD.) "GENEVA, *June* 3.—I send you at last

[1] Of Messrs. Ward & Nixon, Frith Street, Soho.

two rude designs, one for the angel in the circle, the other for the side; both rudely drawn, because to try and get a little purer red, I used this white paper, which takes colour badly: my drawing-paper is all grey. I was obliged to alter my plan in the side piece. I tried the tigers, but it made the angel at the top look like Mr. Wombwell, and the angel at the bottom like Mr. Van Amberg; so I put in a row of gates, which you will please to take for the celestial city, and a bit of unintelligible figure from St. Radegonde [at Poictiers] to fill up, which looks something between a monk and an angel, and may be typical of general felicity. The chaining of the dragon I suppose people will understand. You perceive he holds with his tail tight round an apple-tree. If Mr. Ward could make him look a little less like a gamecock, it would be desirable."

(*Diary.*) "CHAMOUNI, *June* 16.—The hills are as clear as crystal; more lovely, I think, every day, and I don't know how to leave off looking at them."

(*Diary.*) "*June* 23.—9 o'clock, morning. There is a strange effect on Mont Blanc. The Pavillon hills are green and clear, with the pearly clearness that foretells rain; the sky above is fretted with spray of white compact textured cloud which looks like flakes of dead arborescent silver. Over the snow, this is concentrated into a cumulus of the Turner character, not heaped, but laid sloping on the mountain, silver white at its edge, pale grey in interior. . . ."

(*Diary.*) "28*th June, half-past ten.*—I never was dazzled by moonlight until now; but as it rose from behind the Mont Blanc du Tacul, the full moon almost blinded me: it burst forth into the sky like a vast star. For an hour before, the aiguilles had appeared as dark masses against a sky looking as transparent as clear sea, edged at their summits with fleeces of cloud breaking into glorious spray and foam of white fire. A meteor fell over the Dôme as the moon rose; now it is so intensely bright that I cannot see the Mont Blanc underneath it; the form is lost in its light."

Many an hour was spent in thus watching skies; and on this tour Ruskin made also several drawings in colour of considerable beauty.

From Chamouni, Ruskin returned to Geneva, and thence

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by Sion and Brieg across the Simplon to Baveno and back. Here is a time-table which shows the busy eagerness of his days, the fulness of his vitality:—June 15, 6 A.M. Baveno, called on Signor Zanetti and inspected his collection of pictures on the Isola dei Pescatori; walked up most of the defile of Gondo; on reaching the Simplon village, dashed off to catch the sunset from the Col (five miles up hill against time); 8 P.M., "sitting on the highest col of the Simplon, watching the light die on the Breithorn, nothing round me but rock and lichen, except one purple flower" (linaria alpina, outlined); five miles walk back to the inn, "star after star coming out above my head. the white hills gleaming among them, the gulph of pines. with the torrent, black and awful below"; long entry of the day in diary before bed. The next day was one, as he noted (July 16), "to be most grateful for and to remember long." He recalled it, in writing a chapter of *Deucalion* in the same room, thirty-two years later:—

"My father and mother and I were sitting at one end of the long table in the evening; and at the other end of it, a quiet, somewhat severe-looking, and pale, English (as we supposed) traveller, with his wife; she, and my mother, working; her husband carefully completing some mountain outlines in his sketch-book. Whether some harmony of Scottish accent struck my father's ear, or the pride he took in his son's accomplishments prevailed over his own shyness, I think we first ventured word across the table, with view of informing the grave draughtsman that *we* also could draw. Whereupon my own sketch-book was brought out, the pale traveller politely permissive. My good father and mother had stopped at the Simplon inn for me because I wanted to climb the high point immediately west of the Col, thinking thence to get a perspective of the chain joining the Fletschorn to the Monte Rosa. I had brought down with me careful studies . . . of great value to myself, as having won for me that evening the sympathy and help of James Forbes. For his eye grew keen, and his face attentive, as he examined the drawings; and he turned instantly to me as to a recognised fellow-workman,—though yet young, no less faithful than

himself. . . . He told me as much as I was able to learn, at that time, of the structures of the chain, and some pleasant general talk followed; but I knew nothing of glaciers then, and he had his evening's work to finish. And I never saw him again."[1]

But neither ever forgot the other. Twenty, and again thirty, years later Ruskin was to defend Professor Forbes with something of the same zeal that he threw into his defence of Turner:—

(J. D. Forbes *to* Ruskin.) "St. Andrews, *Dec.* 2, 1864. . . . Having almost retired from the din of controversy, it is a pleasurable surprise to me to find now and then some old friend who has not forgotten me, and who has still spirit and fidelity enough to break a lance in my favour. For about three years I have felt disheartened and hopeless as to stemming the popular tide of prepossessions against my 'Theory of Glaciers,' or, I should rather say, against me personally as its author. The article in the *Quarterly* seemed to me to complete the triumph of Tyndall within the limits of his influence. Its dulness and stupid reiteration of exploded statements seemed to me to give the best promise of its speedy oblivion. Advancing years and a permanently depressed state of health have taken the edge off the bitterness which the injustice I have experienced caused me during many years. But, as I said, the old fire revives within me when I see any one willing and courageous, like you, to remember an old friend, and to show that you do so."

From the Simplon, Ruskin and his parents went by Brieg and Visp to Zermatt, where Osborne Gordon was awaiting them. Zermatt was no haunt of tourists in those days, and the commissariat of the little inn, first opened by Dr. Lauber in 1839, was unprepared for its visitors. Ruskin met Gordon as the Matterhorn came in sight. "Yes," said he, "the Matterhorn is all very fine; but do you know there's nothing to eat?" "Nonsense," replied Ruskin, "we can eat anything here." They could sop the black bread in milk, he added. But when supper-time came, it had to be admitted that "one might almost as hopelessly have sopped

[1] The "Forbes" mentioned below, p. 211, was Edward, not James.

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the Matterhorn as the loaf." A day or two sufficed; and Ruskin with his parents descended the valley, his mother, now sixty-three, "walking the ten miles from St. Nicholas to Visp as lightly as a girl." Thence they returned to Brieg, in order that Ruskin might ascend to a point near the Bel Alp, then unknown to English travellers, to draw the panorama which may now be seen in his Museum at Sheffield; and afterwards he explored the gorge of the Aletsch torrent—"making some notes of it used in *Modern Painters*, many and many a day of foot and hand labour having been needed to build that book."

Labour of another kind was needed in picture-galleries, and on his way home Ruskin stayed some days at Paris to study in the Louvre. He came to the pictures there with new eyes. Hitherto Rubens had remained his type of colour-power, and Titian had been beyond him. He owed to a remark of George Richmond, at one of Rogers's breakfast parties, a year or two before this date, his initiation into the principles of Venetian colour. On Rogers's walls hung the original sketch by Rubens for the picture of "The Horrors of War" (in the Pitti Palace), and beneath it a study by Paolo Veronese for "Mary Magdalene anointing the feet of the Saviour":—

"As I was getting talkative over the wild Rubens sketch, Richmond said, pointing to the Veronese, 'Why are you not looking at this,—so much greater in manner?' 'Greater,—how?' I asked, in surprise; 'it seems to me quite tame beside the Rubens.' 'That may be,' said Richmond, 'but the Veronese is true, the other violently conventional.' 'In what way true?' I asked, still not understanding. 'Well,' said Richmond, 'compare the pure shadows on the flesh, in Veronese, and its clear edge, with Rubens's ochre and vermilion, and outline of asphalt.' No more was needed. From that moment, I saw what was meant by Venetian colour."

In the diary written at Paris in 1844 Ruskin's enthusiasm is all for the Venetians. Technical descriptions of pictures are dreary at the best; but a note or two in this sort must be quoted now, and perhaps here and there on later pages,

in order to show the careful study on which his judgments were founded :—

"Paris, *Aug.* 14.—A singular instance of refinement in Titian [No. 1590 : 'Alphonso di Ferrara and Laura di Dianti'], a mirror held to the back of a lady dressing her hair. The mirror is nearly black and invisible, only one square bright light upon it, but on looking close, the light is found to be truly the image of the window given by vertical strokes chiefly, and to be interrupted by a curve below; that of the woman's head reflected. On looking close, the whole figure is seen in the shade of the mirror; the half light on the back, the dark dress, the clasp or knot on the shoulder, and a reflected light on the edge of this shoulder all clear and sharp, no slurring. The face and head-dress of Flora are also reflected in front of the *armour* of the man.

"Paris, *Aug.* 17.—I was a long while yesterday studying the execution of the two large Paul Veroneses, and noting the difference between their manly, fearless, fresco-like attainment of vast effect, in spite of details, and Landseer's, or any other of our best manipulators' paltry dwelling upon them. I have had a change wrought in me, and a strong one, by this visit to the Louvre, and know not how far it may go, chiefly in my full understanding of Titian, John Bellini, and Perugino, and being able to abandon everything for them; or rather, being *un*able to look at anything else.

"The finest Titian in the Gallery [No. 1584 : 'The Entombment'], glowing, simple, broad and grand. It is to be opposed to 'The Flagellation' [No. 1583], in which the shades are brown instead of grey, the outlines strong brown lines, the draperies broken up by folds, the light very round and vivid, and foiled by deep shades; the flesh forms the highest lights, and the draperies are subdued. In 'The Entombment' every one of these conditions is reversed. Even the palest flesh is solemn, and dark, in juxtaposition with bright golden white drapery. All the masses broad and flat, the shades grey, the outlines chaste and severe. May be taken as an example of the highest dignity of impression, wrought out by mere grandeur of colour and composition.

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"*Aug.* 18*th.*—To-morrow we leave. I have been watching the twilight on the Tuileries, which was very grand and clear; and planning works. I shall try to paint a Madonna some day, I believe."

During the winter of 1844–45 (for which there are no diaries) the book seems to have made little progress; he felt, he says, "in a cyclone of new knowledge." He was enlarging the range of his studies in art and nature, and feeling his way to laws common to all manifestations of the beautiful. In the first draft of the second volume there are unfinished chapters in which lines of beauty are illustrated alternately from mountain forms and from the human figure. But for the present his hardest work was in manual practice in the principles of light and shade. He took up Turner's *Liber Studiorum*, practised its methods, "and by the spring-time in 1845 was able to study from nature accurately in full chiaroscuro, with a good frank power over the sepia tinting." During the same winter (1844–45) Ruskin was again reading Rio's *Poetry of Christian Art*. His interest in this book, quickened by his studies in the Louvre, determined him to revisit Italy and study the early Christian painters before proceeding any further with his essay. The tour of 1845 was the decisive factor in making the second volume what it is, and was a turning-point in his career. As such it must be reserved for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVELATION OF TINTORET

(1845)

"True taste is for ever growing, learning, reading, worshipping, laying its hand upon its mouth because it is astonished."—*Modern Painters*, vol. ii.

I

Ruskin left home on April 2, 1845, and was on the Continent, among the Alps and in Italy, for seven months. It was the first tour he had ever undertaken without his father and mother, and great was their anxiety on his behalf. He took with him as travelling servant the young brother of his mother's maid, John Hobbes, called "George" in the Ruskin household where both master and son were named John. He seems to have been a youth of cheerful spirit and humour, and remained in Ruskin's service till 1854. His quaint remarks, and the chaff of him by Couttet the guide, supply the element of light comedy in the tour. While his master was sketching near Albertville, in Savoy, George was sent to see the town. Not much of a town, he reported; he had met "just six living creatures—two dogs, three children, and a man out of his mind." Florence pleased him no better; he did not appreciate the heat and compulsorily light diet. "'Oh, sir,' he said," writes Ruskin, "'think of them at home walking in the acacia walk and eating as many strawberries as they like, and having all the blinds down in the library, and here we are, without a breath of air and mustn't eat anything.'" Among the Alps, George became a mighty walker. But, said Couttet, "afin que George aille bien, il faut lui donner à manger souvent, et beaucoup à la fois." On one occasion Ruskin pointed out first an actual

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scene, and then Turner's vision of it. "George didn't recognize it at first, and on my showing him how it had been adapted—'Well, he is a cunning old gentleman, to be sure; just like Mrs. Todgers, dodging among the tender pieces with a fork.'" George's criticism of Turner's composition has often been made in more pretentious language. But George knew how to humour his master. It is a quaint glimpse that we get of the party at Padua, where, when Ruskin was feeling unwell, George was sent out to buy some scrap of a picture to hang in the bedroom; "and he brought me a seven-inch square bit of fifteenth century tempera, a nameless saint with a scarlet cloak and an embossed nimbus, who much comforted me." Ruskin on his part held himself responsible for George's religious welfare, and let us hope that George appreciated the attentions. "I read my chapter with him," says Ruskin, "morning and evening: and if there were no English Church on Sundays, the Morning Service, Litany and all."

But the commander-in-chief of the expedition was Joseph Couttet, in whose prudence, resourcefulness, and integrity Ruskin's parents had full confidence. It was amply deserved, and Ruskin cherished to the last the warmest affection for this guide, philosopher, and friend—a practical physician also. The letters home during this tour show how carefully Couttet guided, guarded, and physicked his charge. Nothing escaped him; he held an umbrella over Ruskin while the latter sketched; he was even at hand to see that Ruskin always took "a squeeze of lemon in his water." The peasant's time must have hung heavily during the long sojourn at Florence, but he "solaced himself by making a careful collection of all the Florentine wild flowers" in order, as we learn from one of the letters, that Ruskin might compare them with the flowers in Florentine pictures. It must have been with considerable relief that Couttet saw his young employer turn to the mountains. At Macugnaga he was in his element—"cooking the dinner, going out to gather strawberries for tea, mulling wine in the evening, and encouraging everybody all day like Mark Tapley." Couttet was an untaught philosopher. "He could only read

with difficulty and write scarcely intelligibly, and by great effort. But he was, without exception, one of the happiest persons, and, on the whole, one of the best, I have ever known: and after lunch, when he had had his half bottle of Savoy wine, he would generally, as we walked up some quiet valley in the afternoon light, give me a little lecture on philosophy; and after I had fatigued and provoked him with less cheerful views of the world than his own, he would fall back to my servant behind me and console himself with a shrug of the shoulders, and a whispered 'Le pauvre enfant, il ne sait pas vivre!'"[1] He had read clearly enough one aspect of Ruskin's eager temperament. Among the minerals in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, some beautiful pink crystals of fluor may be seen. They are inscribed "The Couttet Rose-Fluors," and were presented by Ruskin "In Honour of his Friend, Joseph Couttet, by whom they were found."[2]

Ruskin, then, was well attended, and he had not the least intention of encountering any perils or privations. He was a luxurious traveller, and fond of his creature comforts. He somewhere professes his sympathy with and propounds his resemblance to St. Jerome; but "there was," he is quick to add, "this terrible difference between us, that while he left, for his studies in the desert, Roman luxury far away, *I* always carried *it* with me, as well as my books, and my chosen kind of desert was—the Hotel de Bellevue at Thun, or the Cascade at the Giessbach"—"with comfortable rooms always ordered," as he says elsewhere, "and a three-course dinner ready by four o'clock."[3] The books were numerous, for he did much serious reading during his travels abroad, and the heaviest box in the boot was full of dictionaries.

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 4.

[2] "I think," wrote Ruskin to the Keeper of the Minerals (Jan. 8, 1888), "the entire Geological Society should meet at Chamouni this year, and resolve never to return,—till they had found the Home of Rose-Fluor." If the Society should ever make the expedition, they should try the Aiguille d'Argentière; for it was there (as Couttet darkly hinted to Mr. Allen) that he found the treasure.

[3] Library Edition, vol. xxxiii. p. 109 *n.*; and *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 74.

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Among his constant travelling-companions were little Testaments; and another was a pocket Horace: this may be seen in the Ruskin Museum at Coniston. He used to take Turner drawings and other examples with him also; contriving arrangements of leather frames for them. He had his special travelling carriage, too, made with any quantity of front and side pockets; and hung low, with a fixed side-step, for better convenience in getting off or on with the horses at the trot. His father, though grudging no reasonable expense, liked to see the accounts, and during the earlier part of this tour Ruskin's letters contain something about hotel and posting charges,[1] but after a time he could be bothered in this way no longer. "I began," he wrote home, "most economically and arithmetically, and went on to Nice counting sous, but at Nice I found myself short by six five-franc pieces, and after puzzling over the matter for two hours I had to give it up, which disgusted me with my accounts, and when I got into pauls and batz and all sorts of rubbishy incalculables, I gave it up in despair, and threw it all into Couttet's hands."

But neither Couttet's care nor Ruskin's own unadventurous habits could allay the anxiety of the fond parents at Denmark Hill, as is indicated clearly enough by passages in the son's letters home. "I am very cautious about ladders," he writes from Florence, "and always try their steps thoroughly, and hold well with hands." So again: "I will take great care of boats at Baveno, merely using them on calm afternoons for exercise": and, on his way to Venice, "You needn't be afraid of railroads; I shan't trouble their dirty ironwork." Turner had foreseen the old

[1] The details are sadly tantalising to tourists with small purses in these latter days. At Lucca (where Ruskin had two large rooms, besides accommodation for George and Couttet), he paid for "every conceivable luxury and convenience," 17½ francs per day (including board for the whole party). At Pisa, where he was yet more spaciously lodged, he paid 17 francs, but he dined out. At Florence, where he had lodgings, he managed for 8 francs a day; "but I am very expensive," he adds, "in sight-seeing." At Airolo, the three fared sumptuously for 7 francs. Couttet considered himself well paid with 4 francs a day.





Ruskin's Mother and Father

From Portraits by James Northcote, R.A.

people's anxiety and tried to dissuade Ruskin from going: "Why *will* you go to Switzerland—there'll be such a fidge about you, when you're gone." Ruskin believed "Turner made up his mind that I was heartless and selfish." It seems possible that Turner's love of mystification may have had something to do with his advice; for he knew that one of Ruskin's motives was to hunt up the artist's sketching-ground. There were, however, some political disturbances at that time in Switzerland, and just a bare possibility of danger. But Ruskin had his work to do; nor in the doing of it did he ever lose loving thought of his parents. A letter written four months later, when the return of the prodigal was being eagerly awaited, illustrates the relation between the son and his parents:—

"Baveno, *Sunday, 24th Aug.*—My dearest Mother,—As I received on the 22nd a letter of my father's dated 13th August, I trust that this will either arrive on or before the second of September, in time to assure you of my most affectionate remembrance of you, and my hope that I shall not be away from you on any more birthdays. I am already in a hurry to get home, even from this delicious place, and I only go to Venice because I *must* see the pictures there before I write; or else I should run direct and directly for Denmark Hill, and be with you, instead of this letter. I think there is such a change come over me lately that there will be no more disagreements between us as to where we shall go to or what we shall do, for my childishnesses are—I am (in one respect) sorry to say,—nearly gone, and now, wherever I am—in church, palace, street or garden—there is always much that I can study and enjoy; and although I am just as self-willed as ever, yet my tastes are so much more yours and my father's that nothing can come wrong to me, and if even you were to desire a sojourn at Wiesbaden or Baden-Baden, I believe I should find enough to employ myself withal; and I think in other places you will find me a little more of the cicerone than I used to be, and perhaps something of the guide where I was formerly only an encumbrance. I am looking forward with infinite delight to the prospect of showing my father all my new loves, making him decipher the sweet writing of Simon Memmi in the Campo Santo,

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and leading him into the dark corners of the cloisters of St. Mark, where my favourite Fra Angelicos look down from the walls like visions, and into the treasuries of the old sacristies, lighted with the glass that glows 'with blood of queens and kings'; and I think I shall have something for *you* too, when I show you the children of Mino da Fiesole—such sweet, living, laughing, holy creatures, that I am afraid you will wish they were yours instead of me. . . . And so I have only to pray you to take care of your sight, and to make yourself comfortable in the idea of my being soon home again—only four weeks more, you know, after you receive this; and I assure you it will not be longer than I can help; not even Venice will keep me longer than is absolutely necessary; and then I hope I shall write a very nice book, and one that I needn't be ashamed of. I have done some good to art already, and I hope to do a great deal more . . . and so, my dearest mother, with every prayer for your long preservation to me,—Believe me ever, your most affectionate son."

On this tour of 1845 Ruskin wrote almost daily to his father or mother, or to both. He kept no other diary of travel, though he filled voluminous note-books with descriptions of pictures and other works of art. From these note-books he contributed a series of comments on various works of art to the third edition (1847) of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in North Italy*.[1] He went first by Beauvais, Paris, Sens, and Dijon to Champagnole, where he had stayed many a time already with his parents:—

"*April* 10.—. . . There was such alacrity on the part of the landlady, and such inquiries after Monsieur and Madame, as made me feel quite at home. At six o'clock they brought me a couple of trout fried, just out of the river, of the richest flavour, followed by a roasted woodcock on delicate toast, and a small perfectly compounded omelette soufflée. To encourage the house, as well as to make that which was already near perfection absolutely perfect, I looked over the carte des vins, and finding half bottles of sillery mousseux at 3 frs., I ordered one, and it turning out very pure

[1] These notes, which had hitherto escaped the attention of Ruskin's editors and bibliographers, are collected in the Library Edition of his Works: see vol. xxxviii. p. 326.

and in fine condition, rendered, as I conceived, the whole thing worthy of Horace or Mr. Rogers. Meanwhile the sun was sinking gradually, and I was warned of something equally perfect in that direction and way by seeing my champagne suddenly become *rose*. And a beautiful sunset it was: glowing over the pine woods, and far up into the sky, long after the sun went down. And as I came back to my soufflée and sillery, I felt sad at thinking how few were capable of having such enjoyment, and very doubtful whether it were at all proper in me to have it all to myself."

At Geneva, Couttet was in waiting; and they travelled leisurely through Lower Savoy and Provence to Fréjus. Thence they drove along the two Rivieras. A fine drawing of stone pine, made at Sestri, may be seen at Oxford. Leaving the coast at Massa, they passed through the southern valleys of the Carrara hills to Lucca. "I settled myself there," Ruskin says, "for ten days—as I supposed. It turned out forty years."

II

His first impressions of Lucca were almost overwhelming:—

"What in the wide world I am to do (he writes, May 4) in or out of this blessed Italy I cannot tell. I have discovered enough in an hour's ramble after mass to keep me at work for a twelvemonth. Such a church! So old, 680 probably, Lombard, all glorious dark arches and columns, covered with holy frescoes and gemmed gold pictures on blue grounds. I don't know when I shall get away, and all the church fronts charged with heavenly sculpture, and inlaid with whole histories in marble."

"The full happiness of that time to me," said Ruskin in his retrospect of this tour, "cannot be explained except to consistently hard workers; and of those, to the few who can keep their peace and health. For the world appeared to me now exactly right. Hills as high as they should be, rivers as wide, pictures as pretty, and masters and men as wise—as pretty and wise could be." The happiness, the

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wonder, the enchantment, shimmer in the letters of this time:—

"Lucca, *Tuesday evening* [*May* 6].—My dearest Father,—Though it is getting late and I have a great deal to write before going to bed, I must give you an account of the way I spend my day here. In the first place, I find it is of no use getting up much before 6, for I only tire myself before the day is over. So at six precisely I am up, and my breakfast—in the shape of coffee, eggs, and a volume of Sismondi—is on the table by 7 to the minute. By 8 I am ready to go out with a chapter of history read. I go to the old Lombard church of which I told you, for the people hardly frequent this (owing to its age and gloom, I suppose), and therefore I can draw there without disturbing any one even during the mass hours. There I draw among the frescoes and mosaics (and with a noble picture of Francia over one altar) until 12 o'clock. Precisely at 12 I am ready to begin my perambulation (with the strong light for the pictures) among the other churches, for the masses are then over, and I can get at everything. I usually go first to San Romano, the church of the Dominican monks, where are the two great Fra Bartolommeos. The monks are most kind in every way, and pleased at my giving so much time to study their pictures. They take all their candlesticks off their altar and bring me steps to get close to the picture with, and leave me with it as long as I like. And such a heavenly picture as one of them is! Mary Magdalene and St. Catherine of Siena, both kneeling, the pure pale clear sky far away behind, and the auburn hair of the Magdalene, hardly undulating but falling straight beside the pale, pure cheek (as in the Middle Ages), and then across the sky in golden lines like light. Well, from San Romano, I go to the Duomo, where there is a most delicious old Sacristan, with the enthusiasm of Jonathan Oldbuck, and his knowledge to boot, and perfectly enraptured to get anybody to listen to him while he reads or repeats (for he knows them all by heart) the quaint inscriptions graven everywhere in Latin (dark, obsolete-lettered Latin) and interprets the emblems on the carved walls. After two hours' work of this kind, and writing—as I go—all I can learn about the history of the churches, and all my picture criticism, I go home to dine—dinner being ready at two exactly. At three

I am again ready to set to work, and then I sit in the open, warm, afternoon air, drawing the rich ornaments on the façade of St. Michele. . . . After working at this till ½ past five or so, I give up for the day, and walk for exercise round the ramparts. There, as you know, I have the Pisan mountains, the noble peaks of Carrara, and the Apennines towards Parma, all burning in the sunset, or purple and dark against it. . . . Finally, when the rose tints leave the clouds, I go and spend a quarter of an hour beside the tomb of Ilaria di Caretto . . . by Jacopo da Quercia. It is in the Cathedral. . . . It is impossible to tell you the perfect sweetness of the lips and closed eyes, nor the solemnity of the seal of death which is set upon the whole figure. The sculpture—as art—is in every way perfect: truth itself, but truth selected with inconceivable refinement of feeling. . . . With this I end my day, and return home, as the lamps begin to burn in the Madonna shrines, to read Dante and to write to you. . . ."

Lucca was a revelation to him, it will have been noticed alike in architecture, in painting, and in sculpture. Hitherto all architecture except fairy-finished Milan had depended with him for its delight on being partly in decay; his admiration had been sentimental; he had looked for signs of age in mouldering of the traceries and in deepening interstices of the stones; but here in Lucca he found himself suddenly "in the presence of twelfth-century buildings, originally set in such balance of masonry that they could all stand without mortar; and in material so incorruptible, that after six hundred years of sunshine and rain, a lancet could not be put between their joints." And again, as he writes elsewhere,[1] "the inlaying of San Michele, as opposed to Gothic *pierced* lace-work, (which was all I cared for in Gothic at that time,) and the pure and severe arcades of finely proportioned columns at San Frediano, doing stern duty under vertical walls, as opposed to Gothic shafts with no end, and buttresses with no bearing, struck me dumb with admiration and amazement; and then and there on the instant, I began, in the nave

[1] Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. i. (ed. 1883).

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of San Frediano[1] the course of architectural study which reduced under accurate law the vague enthusiasm of my childish taste." Thus began at Lucca Ruskin's first serious study of architecture. The picture by Fra Bartolommeo, described in the letter to his father, was, he explains, "the first example of accomplished sacred art I had seen, since my initiation, by the later Turner drawings, into the truths of deep colour and tone. It is a picture of no original power (none of Fra Bartolommeo's are), but it sums the principles of great Italian religious art in its finest period, —serenely luminous sky,—full light on the faces; local colour the dominant power over a chiaroscuro more perfect because subordinate; absolute serenity of emotion and gesture; and rigid symmetry in composition. These technical principles, never to be forgotten (and leaving very few to be added), that single picture taught me in the course of a day's work upon it: and remains accordingly, without being the subject of special admiration, extremely dear to me." The lessons received at the tomb of Ilaria were yet deeper and covered a wider ground. This recumbent statue, described many times in his books, became and ever remained his ideal of Christian sculpture. He saw in it the harmony of those laws of beauty which he had learnt to trace in other fields. "The accurate study of tree branches, growing leaves, and foreground herbage, had more and more taught me the difference between violent and graceful lines: the beauty of Clotilde and Cécile, essentially French-Gothic, and the living Egeria of Araceli,[2] had fixed in my mind and heart, not as an art-ideal, but as a sacred reality, the purest standards of breathing womanhood; and here suddenly, in the sleeping Ilaria, was the perfectness of these, expressed with harmonies of line which I saw in an instant were under the same laws as the river wave, and the aspen branch, and the stars' rising and setting;

[1] I have seen a drawing by Ruskin of this church made at the time, which is thus of special interest. Drawings of S. Michele, also made in 1845, are at Oxford.

[2] Clotilde (Adèle) and Cécile, daughters of Mr. Domecq; "Egeria," Miss Tollemache, "of Araceli" because he had seen her in that church at Rome.

but treated with a modesty and severity which read the laws of nature by the light of virtue." Beside the lady Ilaria sleeping on her tomb he partly then felt, partly vowed, that his life "must no more be spent only in the study of rocks and clouds."[1] The revelation of Lucca turned him, as he says in yet another place, "from the study of landscape to that of life."[2]

III

The lessons were to be enforced yet further at Pisa, where the Campo Santo became to him "a veritable Palestine." In its frescoes he found a graphic Bible spread out before him, containing in its painted legends a complete code of Christian teaching. Everything at Pisa delighted him—the Cathedral, the little church of La Spina, the sunsets on the Carrara mountains. His manner of life was as strenuous as at Lucca:—

"Breakfast at 7, to work at 8, work till one; or on Thursdays and Saturdays till 12, when I go to call on the Professor Rossini and see more pictures. Dine at 2; to work again at 3, always in Campo Santo; stop at 5, walk about town, or as yesterday up on the roof of La Spina, to get the details. Then up Tower to see sunset on Carrara mountains, home at ½ past 7 or 8; tea and write till 9½, or longer, if I am not sleepy; bed at 10."

He worked with eager determination, for the frescoes were peeling and dropping almost before his eyes, and beside each perishing outline he saw

> "One wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
> Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
> —A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
> The wronged great soul of an ancient master."

The vandals were soundly rated by Ruskin also, in letters to

[1] Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii.

[2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 45.

The other quotations in the foregoing pages are from *Præterita*.

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his father which presage many a thunderous objurgation in his books:—

(*May* 13.) "While for want of glass and a good roof these monuments are rotting every day, the wretches have put scaffolding up round the Baptistery, and are putting modern work of the coarsest kind instead of the fine old decayed marble. I do believe that I shall live to see the ruin of everything good and great in the world, and have nothing left to hope for but the fires of judgment to shrivel up the cursed idiocy of mankind. . . . Why wasn't I born fifty years ago? I should have saved much and seen more, and left the world something like faithful reports of the things that have been. . . . God preserve us, and give us leave to paint pictures and build churches in heaven that shan't need repairs."

(*May* 14.) "Two thousand pounds would put glass round the whole of the Campo Santo, and preserve all that remains of the frescoes, and our Government give 2500 for a rascally Guido not worth sixpence. Seriously I am going to write to George Richmond and Sir R. Inglis, and anyone else I can think of, and see if I can't get a subscription set on foot. Two thousand pounds only, to save Giotto, Simon Memmi, Andrea Orcagna, Antonio Veneziano, and Benozzo Gozzoli! and there will not be a fragment left in thirty years more, unless it be done."

(*May* 25.) "I saw some of the improvements going on in the Campo Santo yesterday. They were going to put up a monument to some apothecary, and so three workmen came and knocked a great hole in the wall; of course every blow of the hammer causing the fresco plaster, already loose, to detach itself more and more from the wall, and tearing down at the same time half of what remained of a head of Antonio Veneziano. Then they put up a slab with the apothecary's name upon it, and saying that it was a great pity he was dead (*I* think it's a pity that anybody here is left alive), and then they knocked down some more fresco to put up his bust. This they put up so as to conceal all that they had left of the Antonio head; and then they filled up the whole with wet plaster, and plastered away half a yard more of the old fresco decorated border on each side, to make the wall flat, and so they left it to damp all the painting above and prepare it for tumbling off next time. But

they won't let me take tracings, not they! I shall certainly get into the habit of swearing in Italy." CHAP. VIII.

There was something to be done at once, and that was to make record of the frescoes. Ruskin cajoled the Abbé Rossini into letting him put up a scaffold level with the frescoes, and from this point of vantage he made a series of outline studies from Benozzo Gozzoli. Some of them may be seen in his drawing-school at Oxford. In 1848, in a studio in Gower Street, three young painters were discussing the past, the present, and the future of art. They happened to open a book of old engravings. They were entranced by what they found therein, and then and there Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti established the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.[1] The engravings (Lasinio's, I suppose) were of the same frescoes in the Campo Santo of Pisa that, three years before, had opened "a veritable Palestine" to Ruskin.

IV

When his portfolio was well filled at Pisa, he moved on to Florence, where his "new discoveries," he says, became "yet more absorbing." His eyes were opened, and there was no disappointment now, as four years before. He had lodgings in the Cathedral square, with Giotto's Tower and Brunelleschi's dome always before him. The new enthusiasm is expressed in a letter to his father, written a day or two after his arrival:—

"FLORENCE, *June* 4. . . . I went yesterday to Santa Maria Novella, and was very much taken aback. *There* is the Madonna of Cimabue, which all Florence followed with trumpets to the church; *there* is the great chapel painted by Orcagna, with the Last Judgment, at least 500 figures; *there* is the larger chapel with 14 vast and untouched frescoes, besides the roof, of Domenico Ghirlandajo; *there* is the tomb of Filippo Strozzi; *there* is the great crucifixion of Giotto; there, finally, are three *perfectly* preserved works of Fra

[1] See Holman Hunt's "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" in the *Contemporary Review*, April 1886.

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Angelico, the centre one of which is as near heaven as human hand or mind will ever or can ever go. Talk of chiaroscuro and colour; give me those burnished angel wings of which every plume is wrought out in beaten gold, in zones of crimson and silver colour alternately, which play and flash like, and with far more rainbow hue about them than, the breasts of the Valparaiso birds, which, however, will give you some idea of the effect and power of light in them. And then the faces, without one shadow of earth or mortality about them, all glorified. . . ."

He studied principally the primitives, without, however, neglecting the later painters. His admiration of Michael Angelo knew as yet no abatement, though already he had begun to trace in the work of the crowning masters what he afterwards described as the writing on the wall. "Raphael and Michael Angelo," he says in the same letter, "were great fellows, but from all I can see they have been the ruin of art."

Ruskin's studies at Florence may be traced in nearly every chapter of the later volumes of *Modern Painters*. His note-books show that he did not spare himself. He was sometimes at work by five o'clock in the morning. The galleries, the churches and convents, the private palaces, were all laboriously explored; and those were the days when many works of art, now gathered together in galleries and museums, were still preserved—or more truthfully, neglected—in their several shrines. His main work, for two months, was in the Ghirlandajo chapel of S. Maria Novella, in the Brancacci chapel on Masaccio and Lippi, and in St. Mark's Convent on Angelico. It was at this time, too, that his study of Giotto began. Botticelli was as yet sealed to him. He wrote elaborate descriptions, largely technical, of the pictures, and he made studies from them. He drew a good deal also out of doors; a water-colour sketch of San Miniato, then encircled by a wilderness of wild rose, which has been exhibited and reproduced, is especially charming. Other favourite spots, for study or exercise, were the Spezeria of S. Maria Novella; and the hill of Fiesole, where he made hay with the monks in their convent garden.

But at length it was time to move. The summer-heats of Italy were not so healthful, Couttet urged, as the breeze over Alpine rose; Ruskin himself was tired out, and had much within him that needed quiet thinking on. So they trotted over the Apennines, stayed for a few days at Parma, caught gleams of Monte Rosa from Piacenza and Pavia, and sought mountain-solitude beneath her snows at Macugnaga. Of this now favourite resort, and of the valley of approach to it, Ruskin held heretical views. The Val Anzasca, says Murray, "combines all that is most lovely in Italian with all that is most grand in Swiss scenery." The Val Anzasca, says Ruskin, "is merely a deep furrow through continuous masses of shaly rock, blistered by the sun and rough with juniper, with scattered chestnut-trees and pastures below. There are no precipices, no defiles, no distinct summits on either flank; while the Monte Rosa, occasionally seen at the extremity of the valley, is a mere white heap, with no more form in it than a haycock after a thunder-shower." Macugnaga pleased him no better. "I did not then, nor do I yet, understand why the village should have a name at all, more than any other group of half-a-dozen chalets in a sheltered dip of moorlands." The inn in those days was tiny and primitive, and perhaps even Couttet's ministrations did not make up for the flesh-pots of Florence. A letter from Ruskin to a friend gives a description of the "deal cabin":—

(*To the* Rev. E. Clayton.) "Macugnaga, *Aug.* 3. . . . Up here among the hills—living in a deal cabin, in which I can't stretch without taking the skin off my knuckles, with not a soul whom I can speak to except the cows and the goats and a black puppy, and some sociable moths who come in the evening to put my candle out—I begin to feel more like St. Paul or St. Anthony than myself. I don't mean *our* St. Paul, but *their* St. Paul here—the first hermit, who had the two lions to dig his grave, the two pious lions that wouldn't go away afterwards till they had got St. Anthony's blessing."

Ruskin found that he was not born for solitude like Dr. Zimmermann or St. Paul the Anchorite. He could not

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have stayed out his appointed time at Macugnaga, he says, if it had not been for a pocket volume of Shakespeare which he set himself for the first time to read with serious study. The plays had been familiar to him from childhood; but "the attentive reading meant the discovery of a more perfect truth, or a deeper passion, in the words that had before rung in my ears with too little questioned melody." Ruskin's studies of Shakespeare, scattered through his published works, and in references more numerous than those to any other author except Dante, are well worth collecting. To the attentive reading now commenced at Macugnaga he attributed "the courses of study which led him into fruitful thought out of the till then passive sensation of merely artistic or naturalist thought."

It was artistic and naturalist studies, however, to which he next turned. One of the objects which he had proposed to himself on this tour was to find and study the sites and scenes of some of Turner's "delight-drawings," and more especially of that of the "Pass of Faido" (partly engraved as "The Gate of the Hills" in the frontispiece to the third volume of *Modern Painters*). From Macugnaga, then, he made his way to the Italian side of the St. Gothard, where he found the object of his search, as reported in a letter to his father:—

"Faido, *Friday, August* 15.—I have found his subject or the materials of it here; and I shall devote to-morrow to examining them, and seeing how he has put them together. The stones, road, and bridge are all true; but the mountains, compared with Turner's colossal conception, look pigmy and poor. Nevertheless, Turner has given their actual, not their apparent size. . . . I have got two sketches to day (Saturday) of Mr. Turner's subject, and a specimen of the stones of the torrent—gneiss coloured by iron ochre proceeding from decomposing garnets. The road on the left is the old one, which has been carried away in the pass, and that on the right is the new one, which crosses the stream by the shabby temporary bridge. It has been carried away twice, so that there are the remains of two roads and two bridges, and three new bridges of wood, which Turner has cut out, keeping the one he wanted. The gallery on

the left is nearly destroyed—it protected the road from a cataract which has now taken another line, and has left the worn channel you see."

The studies here recorded, with others of later years, went to building up Ruskin's well-known chapter on "Turnerian Topography."[1] The "specimen of the stones of the torrent" was a cherished possession. He used to show it, side by side with Turner's drawings, to his class at Oxford, as often also to visitors at Denmark Hill and Brantwood.

V

The travels were now extended, and in a direction which was to enlarge once more the revelations of this year, by a letter from Harding asking if Ruskin would join him on an autumn sketching-tour. Ruskin went down to meet him at Baveno, and thence they drove, stopping to sketch as they went, by Como, Bergamo, Desenzano, and Verona, to Venice. The travelling companions, though diverse in styles, were sympathetic in tastes. "We could always sit down to work," says Ruskin, "within a dozen yards of each other, both pleased. I did not mind his laughing at me for poring into the foreground weeds, which he thought sufficiently expressed by a zigzag, and heartily admired in him the brilliancy of easy skill, which secured, and with emphasis, in an hour or two, the effect of scenes I could never have attempted." It is worth noting, however, that some of Ruskin's drawings of this year show a new breadth and selection. There is a "View from Vogogna," for instance, in which "a vista of ranges of mountains and distant lake is treated with all the style of the modern 'secession' in its decorative use of natural material and omission of the inessential."[2] At Venice, Harding and Ruskin were at first preoccupied with sketching. They were moored every morning at six o'clock among the boats in the fruit-market; in the

[1] See, further, on this subject, below, p. 367.

[2] *Catalogue of the Ruskin Exhibition at Manchester*, 1904, No. 336. The drawing is Plate 5 in vol. xxxvi. of the Library Edition.

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afternoons they lashed the gondola to the stern of a fishing-boat, "sailing, as the wind served, within or outside the Lido, and sketching the boat and her sails in their varied action—or Venice, as she shone far away beyond her islands." On the sunset-walks in the evening, they were often accompanied by two other English visitors, staying also at Danieli's—Boxall, afterwards Royal Academician and Director of the National Gallery, and Mrs. Jameson, working at Venice on her *Sacred and Legendary Art*. The three artists never had the same reasons, but they liked the same pictures—much to Mrs. Jameson's peace of mind, says Ruskin, in his kindly, though pungent, notice of that estimable compiler.

Harding for the most part left Ruskin to do picture-seeing by himself; but one day, after they had been in Venice for a fortnight, they went together and knocked at the door of the Scuola di San Rocco, to see the then little-known and uncared-for Tintorets within. The visit was a turning-point in the work of Ruskin's life:—

"But for that porter's opening, I should (so far as one can ever know what they should) have written, *The Stones of Chamouni*, instead of *The Stones of Venice*: and the *Laws of Fésole*, in the full code of them, before beginning to teach in Oxford: and I should have brought out in full distinctness and use what faculty I had of drawing the human face and form with true expression of their higher beauty. But Tintoret swept me away at once into the 'mare maggiore'[1] of the schools of painting which crowned the power and perished in the fall of Venice; so forcing me into the study of the history of Venice herself; and through that into what else I have traced or told of the laws of national strength and virtue."

He came away from the Scuola di San Rocco feeling, as he says elsewhere, that he "had seen that day the Art of Man in its full majesty for the first time; and that there was also a strange and precious gift in myself enabling me to recognize it, and therein ennobling, not crushing me."[2]

[1] Tintoret's saying, as recorded by Ridolfi: "E faticoso lo studio della pittura, e sempre si fa il mare maggiore."

[2] Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii.

His function was henceforth, he felt, to be that of the Interpreter in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. CHAP. VIII.

The revelation of Tintoret is described in letters to his father:—

"VENICE, *Sept.* 23.—I have been quite overwhelmed to-day by a man whom I never dreamed of—Tintoret. I always thought him a good and clever and forcible painter; but I had not the smallest notion of his enormous powers. Harding has been as much taken aback as I have—but he says he is 'crumbled up,' while I feel encouraged and excited by the good art. . . . It is marvellous lucky I came here, or I might have disgraced myself for ever by speaking slightly of Tintoret. I look upon Tintoret now, though as a less perfect painter, yet as a far greater man than Titian ipse. . . .

"*Sept.* 24.—I have had a draught of pictures to-day enough to drown me. I never was so utterly crushed to the earth before any human intellect as I was to-day—before Tintoret. Just be so good as to take my list of painters and put him in the school of Art at the top—top—top of everything, with a great big black line underneath him to stop him off from everybody; and put him in the school of Intellect, next after Michael Angelo. He took it so entirely out of me to-day that I could do nothing at last but lie on a bench and laugh. Harding said that if he had been a figure-painter, he never could have touched a brush again, and that he felt more like a flogged schoolboy than a man, and no wonder. Tintoret don't seem able to stretch himself till you give him a canvas forty feet square, and then—he lashes out like a leviathan, and heaven and earth come together. M. Angelo himself cannot hurl figures into space as he does, nor did M. Angelo ever paint space which would not look like a nutshell beside Tintoret's. Just imagine the audacity of the fellow—in his Massacre of the Innocents one of the mothers has hurled herself off a terrace to avoid the executioner and is falling head foremost and backwards—holding up the child still.

"And such a Resurrection as there is!—the rocks of the sepulchre cracked all to pieces and roaring down upon you, while the Christ soars forth into a torrent of angels, whirled up into heaven till you are lost ten times over. And then to see his touch of quiet

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thought in his awful Crucifixion. There is an *ass* in the distance, feeding on the remains of palm leaves. If that isn't a master's stroke, I know not what is. As for painting, I think I didn't know what it meant till to-day; the fellow outlines you your figure with ten strokes, and covers it with as many more. I don't believe it took him ten minutes to invent and paint a whole length. Away he goes, heaping host on host, multitudes that no man can number —never pausin , never repeating himself. Clouds and whirlwinds and fire and infinity of earth and sea, all alike to him. . . ."

The rush and enthusiasm of Ruskin's new discoveries are even more striking in these first impressions, than in the more deliberate descriptions, based upon them, in his books. One sees how true of his own case is what he says in the passage from which I have quoted at the head of this chapter: "true taste is for ever growing, learning, reading, worshipping, laying its hand upon its mouth because it is astonished, lamenting over itself, and testing itself by the way that it fits things."

V

Harding presently returned home, while Ruskin remained to continue his learning, reading, worshipping. He was engaged, among other studies from Tintoret, in making the pen-and-sepia drawing of a portion of the Crucifixion in S. Rocco of which he afterwards placed photographs on sale. The incessant work and emotional strain began to tell. "You will not feel it at present," Couttet had said to him, "but you will feel it afterwards." At Padua, and again on the homeward journey from Geneva to Paris, a fit of nervous depression, accompanied by some fever and tingling in the throat, overtook him; a letter from home, announcing the death of his eldest Croydon cousin, a strong and dutiful youth, struck him, he says, with awe, and "wonder what my own selfish life was to come to or end in." He fell into "the temper and more or less tacit offering of very real prayer"; and "on the third day what people who are in the habit of praying

know as the consciousness of answer came to me, and a certainty that the illness, which had all this while increased if anything, would be taken away." This certainty of mind, this happy sense of direct relation with Heaven, passed away; Ruskin was not to regain any large part of it till after many spiritual wanderings. "I had scarcely reached home in safety," he says, "before I had sunk back into the faintness and darkness of the Under-World." The Under-World, I think he means, in the sense of a falling away in the fervour of his personal faith, not in that of any intellectual dubiety. The temper which was his during these travels of 1845, and in which, upon his return home, he resumed his work, is shown by his lines on "Mont Blanc Revisited":—

> "They meet me, 'midst thy shadows cold,—
> Such thoughts as holy men of old
> Amid the desert found;—
> Such gladness, as in Him they felt
> Who with them through the darkness dwelt,
> And compassed all around."

His mind was now well stored; his heart was burning within him. He was full of new discoveries which he held to be certain truths; of happy enthusiasms which he expected all the world to share, as soon as he could get them written down. The faith of his childhood was still unshaken; he was possessed by the joy of a beautiful world, as yet undimmed by any shadow from its sorrows; he had thought out a theory which seemed to explain and sanctify the beauty and the joy. Such was the temper in which he sat down in his study at Denmark Hill to write his famous second volume.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECOND VOLUME OF *MODERN PAINTERS*

(1845–1846)

"O world, as God has made it! All is beauty;
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty."—BROWNING.

RUSKIN reached Denmark Hill at the beginning of November 1845. The second volume of *Modern Painters*, on which he now worked uninterruptedly, was published on April 24, 1846. The actual composition cannot thus have taken him much more than five months; but his studies for it had occupied him for three years.

I

The first volume was now going into a third edition, and the publishers had accepted the new volume on the author's terms, as decided by his father, for they had already reported it as called for by the public. Some of the author's drawings which had been exhibited had added to his reputation. "It happened to us within the last few weeks," wrote one of the reviewers, "to be a guest at a meeting of the Graphic Society, where some drawings from the pencil of the gentleman to whom the authorship of this work is ascribed were exhibited, and on that occasion a member of the Royal Academy, after examining one of the subjects with much attention, exclaimed in our hearing—'The man who can draw like that may write anything he pleases upon art.'"[1] The second volume could thus count on a respectful hearing; and "the press reviews," says Ruskin, "were either cautious or complimentary—

[1] *Church of England Quarterly Review*, July 1846.

none, to the best of my memory, contemptuous."[1] This was not quite the case; for the *Athenæum*, which had loudly assailed the champion of Turner before, now re turned to the charge with a copious vocabulary of abuse against his new production. "Flowers of Billingsgate," "brick-bats," "kennel-water," "eructations of idle wind," were among the critical amenities which it bestowed upon the Graduate. But the notices were, upon the whole, highly complimentary; especially those in the quarterly reviews, then more numerous and influential than now. The *Foreign Quarterly*, for instance, in a notice of the two volumes together, remarked that in the second volume the author "speaks in a tone of maturer judgment, and greater modesty," and pronounced the book to be "the most valuable contribution towards a proper view of painting, its purpose and means, that has come within our knowledge." The *Ecclesiastic*, another quarterly review of the time, predicted that the writer's "love and devotion will find their reward in kindling kindred flames in others, and securing a rich tribute of homage and sympathy which nothing else receives besides true and original genius." One such tribute, which Ruskin valued greatly, came from Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh, who had written to the author, as yet unknown to him, immediately upon reading the book. "I need not say," replied "The Author of *Modern Painters*," "that I am grateful to you for expressing your feelings to me, and that the support of such assurances of sympathy is in every way precious. You appear to feel at present perhaps a little too enthusiastically; as I suppose is generally the case with our first reception of that for which we are prepared by previous tendencies of feeling in the same direction." A little later, the identity of the author became known to Dr. Brown, who had been asked to write upon the book for the *North British Review*. The notice was sufficiently complimentary:—

"This is a very extraordinary and a very delightful book, full of truth and goodness, of power and beauty. If genius may

[1] *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 192.

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be considered (and it is as serviceable a definition as is current) that power by which one man produces, for the use or the pleasure of his fellow-men, something at once new and true, then have we here its unmistakable and inestimable handiwork. . . . The book gave us wings, opened new doors into heaven, brought the country into the town, made the invisible seen, the distance near."

But the editor of the Review, thinking it judicious, I suppose, to mingle something of the bitter, had interpolated various qualifications; and amongst them, a "wish that the author would determine at once and for good not to be eloquent any more." Brown wrote to explain the nature of the case, and Ruskin replied (June 27, 1846):—

"I do not think there is one whit more fault-finding than is fully and fairly warrantable, certainly no more than is *expedient*, for I fear that if your kind spirit of praise had thoroughly pervaded the article there had been much chance of all being set down as the work of my friends and private abettors, and much of the credit it will now carry refused in consequence. Nevertheless, for my own part, I *was* glad to hear *you* had not written the passages in question, for, though preparing to consider them and benefit by them as I best might, I was a little aghast at the request that I would never be eloquent any more: for I do think that some things cannot be said except passionately and figuratively, and my own tendencies at present are so entirely prosaic, and such delight as I once had in, or power over, the fancy so fast evaporating or freezing, or sinking, as Wordsworth has it, from the *fountain* into the '*comfortless and hidden well*,' that it pains me to be thrust away from the last hold that I had, or thought I had, upon the *altar*, and ordered into the ice-house of mere philosophy, there to be kept cool and dry. . . ."

II

The book, which was thus favourably received, differs both in style and in subject-matter from its predecessor. "The calmer tone of the second volume resulted," he afterwards said, "from the simple fact that the first was written in

great haste and indignation, for a special purpose and time; —the second, after I had got engaged, almost unawares, in inquiries which could not be hastily nor indignantly pursued."[1] He was now dealing with arguments of high philosophy, and he sought elevation and dignity of language. In theory he was opposed to any tricks of style which departed from simplicity; in practice, however, he fell into some mannerisms—afterwards exposed unmercifully by himself. He had been sent to Hooker by his tutor, Osborne Gordon, and imitation led him into affectations,—"in the notion," as he says, "of returning as far as I could to what I thought the better style of old English literature."[2] The second volume contains throughout high thought wedded to stately language; it includes many passages which are favourites in books of selections; and it sustains, hardly with a break, a note of dignity. But probably Ruskin's own verdict is likely to stand: the style of the second volume is too self-conscious; it was an experiment rather than a development; "it was not," he says, "my proper style."[3]

In subject-matter, the second volume reflects the new studies which had occupied the author during 1845. The successive enthusiasms are reflected in the perorations of the several volumes. The first had ended with an exhortation to Turner to "let each exertion of his mighty mind be both hymn and prophecy; adoration to the Deity, revelation to mankind." The second ends with a canticle in praise of "the angel choirs of Angelico, with the flames on their white foreheads waving brighter as they move, and the sparkles streaming from their purple wings like the glitter of many suns upon a sounding sea, listening, in the pauses of alternate song, for the prolonging of the trumpet blast, and the answering of psaltery and cymbal, throughout the endless deep and from all the star shores of heaven." One of the objects of the volume was to be an Interpreter in England—of the school of Angelico at Florence, of the school of Tintoret at

[1] *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. Appendix xi.
[2] *Sesame and Lilies*, 1871 Preface, § 1.
[3] *Love's Meinie*, § 130.

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Venice. The effect of the book in these respects, which alone can be measured with any precision, was sure and speedy. It turned the taste of the age to the primitives. The acquisition for the National Gallery of many early Italian pictures—a policy which Ruskin advocated strenuously in a letter to the *Times* in 1847—is an illustration of this conversion of taste and interest. The foundation and work of the Arundel Society are another. Of this Society, established in 1849 and dissolved in 1897, Ruskin was from the first a member of the Council, other members being his friends Liddell, Newton, and Oldfield. The original prospectus of the Society, after referring to the importance of meeting a revived interest in art by suitable instruction. remarks—as if in echo of passages of the second volume of *Modern Painters*—that "the materials for such instruction are abundant, but scattered, little accessible, and, in some instances, passing away. Of the frescoes of Giotto. Orcagna, Ghirlandajo, much which has never been delineated. nor even properly described, is rapidly perishing." The water-colour copies of works of art made for the Society, and reproduced by it in chromo-lithography, were on its dissolution presented to the National Gallery. The reader who examines the collection there will see how many of the works to which Ruskin called attention were selected by the Society for record.

In connexion with the Arundel Society I may notice here, though out of chronological order. Ruskin's book on Giotto. In 1853 the Society commissioned Mr. Williams to make drawings of Giotto's frescoes in the Arena Chapel at Padua. The drawings, cut on wood by the brothers Dalziel, were published at intervals between 1853 and 1860; and, with each batch of them, descriptive letterpress by Ruskin was included. With the first part, issued in 1853, his famous essay on Giotto's life and genius was given. In some respects modern criticism of Giotto has "got past Ruskin now," and in others he himself would, later in his life, have revised the essay. There is in it a certain note of apology, which he certainly would not have used had the book been written twenty years later. "The early efforts of

Giotto," he had written in his first volume, "are the burning messages of prophecy, delivered by the stammering lips of infants." He came afterwards to regard the stammerer as a mighty master.[1] The Protestant bias is also noticeable in the essay. And, again, as Ruskin said in an "Advertisement," he had made no study of Giotto's life; for historical data he accepted Lord Lindsay, and was thus led into some statements which, in the light of later inquiries, are almost certainly erroneous. Ruskin, it should be noted more particularly, places Giotto's work at Assisi after that at Padua; the more generally received view is that the frescoes in the Arena Chapel were the later by some years, those in Santa Croce being, again, much later still. The essay on Giotto and the notes on the frescoes remain, nevertheless, the standard work on their subject, and at the time of first publication made almost an epoch in the study of Italian art in this country. English taste, in the years when the book first appeared, was only beginning to awake to a due appreciation of the Primitives, and Ruskin showed the way to a fuller knowledge of Giotto. The points upon which he insisted—the balanced sanity of Giotto's intellect, the broad humanity of his temper, his power of entering into the heart of a subject, and his peculiar faculty of dramatic presentation—these remain the essential points in all authoritative criticisms of the painter, while nothing that is much significant has been found for addition to Ruskin's notes on the legendary, dramatic, and artistic characteristics of the several frescoes.

The second volume of *Modern Painters* was no less successful in establishing the fame of Tintoret. It has been well pointed out that Ruskin had come to Venice in a right mood to appreciate the sweep and grandeur of Tintoretto's genius. "Fresh from the stormy grandeur of the St. Gothard, he found the lurid skies and looming giants of the Visitation, or the Baptism, or the Crucifixion, re-echoing the subjects of Turner as 'deep answering to deep.'"[2] Between Turner and Tintoret there is, indeed, both intellectual and technical

[1] See chap. xiv. in the next volume.

[2] W. G. Collingwood's *Life of John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 104.

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affinity. "Greater imagination, a grander impressionism and conception, and a more burning zeal, rather than a faithful adherence to the traditions of the schools, was Tintoretto's message to the ages."[1] It was the message that Turner also conveyed, and there is reason for thinking that in the mighty Venetian he had recognised a kindred spirit. Samuel Rogers, when on his way to Italy, had met several artists returning from that country. The first was Sir Thomas Lawrence, and Rogers put the question to him, "What do you think the finest picture you have seen in Italy?" After slight hesitation, he replied, "*The Miracle of St. Mark*, by Tintoretto." Rogers then said, "The next painter I met was Turner, and I put the same question to him. Without a moment's hesitation he said 'Tintoretto.'"[2] It was part of Ruskin's mission to reveal the genius of both painters to the modern world. He justly claimed[3] that he disclosed the supremacy of Tintoret, who had fallen almost into neglect[4] until this volume and the third of *The Stones of Venice* were published. In this respect, as also in winning better recognition for the school of Fra Angelico, the second volume of *Modern Painters* assuredly did not miss its mark. Ruskin refers in *The Stones of Venice*[5]—with "astonishment and indignation"—to the notice of Tintoret in Kugler's *Handbook of Painting*, then and for many years to come

[1] J. B. Stoughton Holborn's *Tintoretto*, 1903, p. 90.

[2] *Reminiscences of Frederick Goodall, R.A.*, 1902, p. 37.

[3] *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., Epilogue, § 13; *Præterita*, i. § 180; *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 61 and 67.

[4] That is, among critics and the general public. That artists appreciated Tintoret we have already seen. The following tribute by Etty may be added. Writing to Lawrence from Venice in 1823, he says: "*You*, I am sure, must have been much struck with the Tintorets here; in the Academy, Ducal Palace, etc.; his Last Judgment, Crucifixion, small St. Agnes. What a glorious group that is we see at the foot of the Cross! Really, for composition, for pathos, appropriate and harmonious combination of hues, and great executive power, I have never seen it excelled, rarely equalled. The poetry of his Last Judgment, the hues, the teeming richness of composition,—figures whirled in all possibilities of action and foreshortening,—excite astonishment at his powers that does not easily subside" (Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Etty*, i. 169).

[5] Introductory remarks to Venetian Index.

the recognised authority in such matters. The note added to later editions of the *Handbook* is significant of the efficacy of Ruskin's championship:—

"The remarks in the text upon Tintoretto have been retained, although they do scant justice to that great master, whose works are now better known and more fully understood and appreciated in England, principally through the eloquent writings of Mr. Ruskin. It may be asserted with confidence that no painter has excelled him in nobility and grandeur of conception, and few in poetic intention."[1]

Mr. Charles Eliot Norton has well said that the chapters in the second volume on Imagination, with their "illustrations of the theme drawn from the works . . . of Tintoret, the artist endowed above all others with imaginative power, form an unrivalled text-book for the student of the nobler qualities of the art. This section of the book," he adds, "in its setting forth of the function of the imaginative faculty in pictorial art, may well be compared with Wordsworth's *Prefaces* in their study of the same faculty as displayed in poetry. Wordsworth's and Ruskin's treatises are mutually complementary; and they afford a body of doctrine admirably fitted to enlighten, enlarge, and elevate the understanding of the reader in its appreciation of the work and worth of the most precious and loftiest of human powers."[2]

III

The interpretation of Angelico and Tintoretto was, however, only one object of Ruskin's book. The other was to "explain the nature of that quality of beauty which I now saw to exist through all the happy conditions of living organism";[3] to explain its nature, and to explain also the "theoretic faculty" of admiration by which it may be apprehended. In this respect the second volume of *Modern*

[1] Fifth edition, 1887, vol. ii. p. 612.

[2] Introduction to the American "Brantwood Edition" of *Modern Painters*, vol. ii.

[3] *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 183.

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Painters occupies a central place in Ruskin's system, and his attitude at different times towards the book is of some interest. The second volume was reprinted in 1848, 1851, 1856, and 1869; it was included, of course, in the complete new edition of 1873. He was averse, however, from the republication of the book, and was especially out of humour with the second volume. He had outgrown its theological standpoint; he was ashamed of its sectarian narrowness; and he was displeased by its affectations of style. Hence, when contemplating a revised series of his Works in 1870–71, he excluded the second volume of *Modern Painters* from its scope.[1] Subsequently, however, he selected that very volume for separate and special republication. What caused him to change his mind was, firstly, the rise of the so-called "æsthetic" craze, with which by the ignorant he was sometimes himself connected; and, next, the constraint he felt to reinforce the system of "natural philosophy and natural theology," which he had accepted as the basis of his teaching and which had come to be assailed on so many sides. He had intended, he says, "never to have reprinted the second volume of *Modern Painters*"; but "I find now," he added, "that the 'general student' has plunged into such abysses, not of analytic, but of dissolytic,—dialytic—or even diarrhœic—lies, belonging to the sooty and sensual elements of his London and Paris life, that however imperfectly or dimly done, the higher analysis of that early work of mine ought at least to be put within his reach; and the fact, somehow, enforced upon him, that there were people before *he* lived, who knew what 'æsthesis' meant, though they did not think that pigs' flavouring of pigs'-wash was ennobled by giving it that Greek name: and that there were also people who knew what vital beauty meant, though they did not seek it either in the model-room, or the Parc aux Cerfs."[2] To the same effect is the note added in 1883 to the first chapter of the second volume, in protest against the "æsthetic" folly "which in recent days has made art at once the corruption, and the jest, of the vulgar world." Similarly,

[1] *Sesame and Lilies*, 1871 Preface, § 2.

[2] *Love's Meinie* (1881), § 130.

Ruskin felt impelled to republish his second volume as a protest against "so many baseless semblances of philosophy," and as a vindication of the Faith "in the creating Spirit, as the source of Beauty."[1] Accordingly in 1882 he prepared, and in the following year published, a new and revised edition of this second volume. He had come to feel in the end that he had builded better than he knew, and that the volume, which he had thought of discarding, might yet be of special value in its time.[2]

What, then, is Beauty according to Ruskin? and what, the faculty which apprehends it? "There is," he says, "no other definition of the Beautiful, nor of any subject of delight to the æsthetic faculty, than that it is what one noble spirit has created, seen and felt by another of similar or equal nobility. So much as there is in you of ox, or of swine, perceives no beauty, and creates none; what is human in you, in exact proportion to the perfection of its humanity, can create it, and receive."[3] The beautiful is not, as Keats said, the true; for the mirage of the desert is fairer than its sands. Nor is it the useful; unless the most beautiful products of art are spades and millstones. Nor does it depend on custom; Gower Street may become less ugly to you if you are used to it, but it is not custom that is the cause of the beauty of Giotto's Tower. Nor does it depend on association of ideas. Associations are a source of pleasure; so is beauty; but beauty is not therefore association. No; beauty consists, says Ruskin, in certain external qualities of bodies which are *typical* of Divine attributes, and in the appearance of felicitous fulfilment in *vital* things. Every one has heard of the repose of true beauty; why is repose beautiful? Because it is "a type of Divine permanence," and satisfies

> "The universal instinct of repose,
> The longing for confirmed tranquillity,
> Inward and outward, humble and sublime—
> The life where hope and memory are one."

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[1] *Deucalion* (1883), vol. ii. ch. ii.

[2] See further on this subject, Vol. II. chap. xxiv.

[3] *Aratra Pentelici*, § 12.

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That is an instance of what Ruskin means by *Typical Beauty*. Why, again, is "the ideal" beautiful? Why is the skylark beautiful? Because it so perfectly fulfils the bird-ideal; so happily performs, that is, the functions of songster of the sky. Why is the face of an ideal man more beautiful than that of the man in the street? Because art is "the pure mirror that can show the seraph standing by each body, as signal to the heavenly land." That is what is meant by *Vital Beauty*. Beauty, then, according to Ruskin, is "the expression of the creating spirit of the universe." Beautiful things are useful to men because they are beautiful, and for the sake of their beauty. The science of nature "must give heed not only to her chemical or physical composition, her truth, her utility, her richness, her fertility, her evolution, but to that also which we worship in life and despise in argument, which is graven in facts and prescribed by systems, which we seek in silence and dream of with awe —the Beautiful."[1] We may name the creating spirit of the universe as we will, but the recognition of it is a condition of the right apprehension of the beautiful. The theoretic or contemplative faculty which apprehends the beautiful is not a mere operation of the sense, neither is it entirely of the intellect:—

"For, as it is necessary to the existence of an idea of beauty, that the sensual pleasure which may be its basis should be accompanied first with joy, then with love of the object, then with the perception of kindness in a superior intelligence, finally, with thankfulness and veneration towards that intelligence itself; and as no idea can be at all considered as in any way an idea of beauty, until it be made up of these emotions, any more than we can be said to have an idea of a letter of which we perceive the perfume and the fair writing, without understanding the contents of it, or intent of it; and as these emotions are in no way resultant from, nor obtainable

[1] *Ruskin et la Religion de la Beauté*, by Robert de la Sizeranne, 1897. The chapter in that book headed "Nature" contains an admirable summary of Ruskin's theory. M. de la Sizeranne honoured me by giving therein a sentence or two from my *Studies in Ruskin* (1890), and I now take leave to quote a sentence or two from him.

by, any operation of the Intellect; it is evident that the sensation of beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor is it intellectual on the other, but is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart." [1]

The world of beauty is like the Beryl in Rossetti's ballad—

"None sees here but the pure alone."

It is the theoretic faculty that apprehends better than reason or the senses "the claim of all lower nature on the hearts of men; of the rock, and wave, and herb as part of their necessary spirit life." And the exercise of the faculty is itself the service of Heaven. This thought is Aristotle's, in the great sentence of the *Ethics* which Ruskin thus translates: "Perfect happiness is some sort of energy of Contemplation, for all the life of the gods is (therein) glad; and that of men, glad in the degree in which some likeness of the gods in this energy belongs to them. For none other of living creatures (but men only) can be happy, since in no way can they have any part in Contemplation."

Such are the ideas which Ruskin expresses in the second volume of *Modern Painters*. "I am warned," said Emerson, "by the ill fate of many philosophers not to attempt a definition of Beauty." Ruskin's theory has been, and will be, assailed; but it is consistent with itself, it explains many of the phenomena, and it harmonises, better than any other philosophy of the beautiful, with a system of natural religion—the religion, as Ruskin says, of Job and of Linnæus. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." "As one awaked out of sleep, I saw the Lord passing by—eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and I stood as in a trance." The volume has, moreover, a permanent value, independent of the theory which it expounds. No one, I think, can read the chapters on Infinity, Unity, Repose, Symmetry, Purity, and Moderation—or, again, those under the head of Vital Beauty—without having his ideas of the beautiful enlarged, or clarified. Ruskin was to continue during many years and

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. sec. i. ch. ii. § 8.

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in many volumes to illustrate the phenomena of nature and the principles of their beauty which he had described and defined in the two first volumes of *Modern Painters;* and "it is not too much to say that he, like Winckelmann, has given the mind a new organ for the appreciation of beauty."[1] These earlier volumes of *Modern Painters* did much, too, in their day, and are of permanent importance as tending to create a high ideal both of art and of taste. Art, which is the interpretation and creation of beauty, is no recreation—it is not a mere amusement, "a minister to morbid sensibilities, a tickler and fanner of the soul's sleep." It is more than this; not because art is not to give pleasure: on the contrary, it is not art unless it does; but because the pleasures to which it is the highest function of art to appeal are not mere pleasures of sense. Ruskin, as was said in the leading English journal on the day following his death,

> "constructed an ideal for the artist as well as an ideal of art. He showed the artistic profession that it has a mission like the pulpit. He inculcated upon it self-respect because its art is worthy of respect. . . . Artists must not be unmindful that they owe the fuller recognition of their title to public admiration and public patronage in no small degree to the blaze of glory with which his meteoric pen has invested their whole vocation. Every painter has risen in stature by virtue of John Ruskin's vindication of the heights to which English art must, and English artists may, aspire."[2]

Nowhere are such high ideals more powerfully presented than in the second volume of *Modern Painters.*

[1] Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Æsthetic.*
[2] *Times,* Jan. 22, 1900.

CHAPTER X

MARRIAGE

(1846–1848)

"The writer's whole time has lately been occupied in taking drawings from one side of buildings, of which masons were knocking down the other; nor can he yet pledge himself to any time for the publication of the conclusion of *Modern Painters;* he can only promise that its delay shall not be owing to any indolence on his part."—Preface to the first edition of *The Seven Lamps.*

By the time the second volume of *Modern Painters* was in the hands of the public, Ruskin was again on the Continent. He had felt severely the strain of writing the volume, and in April 1846 he started to revisit old scenes and to show his parents some of his new discoveries, No further portion of *Modern Painters* saw the light until 1856. During this intervening decade, the *magnum opus* was never wholly out of the author's mind, but its place of precedence was for a while usurped by other thoughts and tasks. "It is curious," he notes in his diary of 1849, "that in literature the most successful books seem to have been planned as they went on." Not Ruskin's books only, but also the order in which he wrote them, were planned as he went on, and his mental journeying was at no time free from digressions. At the end of the second volume of *Modern Painters,* he was rapt in contemplation of "the angel choirs" of the early Italian painters. He followed up that volume by some minor writings on allied subjects; but these were anonymous, and when he next appeared before the public with another volume, it was found to be devoted to the principles and ideals of Gothic architecture. This new study occupied him for seven years, and its results were embodied in five

CHAP. X. illustrated volumes—*The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice*, vol. i. (1851), *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (1851), and *The Stones of Venice*, vols. ii. and iii. (1853).

I

Ruskin did not realise at the time when he started off on his new enterprise how long the interruption was to be. When he was writing *The Seven Lamps*, he still thought that one more volume would complete *Modern Painters;* while, doubtless, he did not foresee how laborious the studies for his projected work on Venetian architecture would become. Hence he felt no hesitation in yielding to a new impulse, or—it were, perhaps, better to say—in obeying a new call. He was ever impetuous and enthusiastic: whatever his hand found to do, he began doing with all his might on the instant. In 1845 he had turned from the study of rocks and clouds to that of Fra Angelico and Tintoret. He hurried home full of fervour, and put out the second volume of *Modern Painters*. But already, as we have heard, another interest was stirring within him. His gift for architectural drawing had greatly developed, and he saw around him on all sides the passing away of beautiful buildings which he felt that he had the capacity to understand and the skill to record. It was a question, he said to himself, of now or never. Delay would be doubly fatal. He might be too late to record, and his readers would no longer be able to see. Thus the same burning enthusiasm that first threw him into the defence of Turner, and then into the interpretation of Tintoret, now diverted him to mediæval architecture.

Perhaps, too, something was due to intellectual reaction. Like most great workers, he knew only one form of recreation —a change of work. The close study of architecture may have come as a relief from that of painting. He and his parents went first to Champagnole, and an entry in his diary is interesting as giving the note on the spot from which

a famous passage in *The Seven Lamps* was afterwards written:— CHAP. X.

"CHAMPAGNOLE, *April* 19. . . . I have been walking in the woods beside the river on the ascent towards St. Laurent, and I have never seen anything like the luxuriance of the wood anemone and oxalis; I think Shelley's 'pearled Arcturi of the earth' would apply better to the anemone than the daisy, for the star shape is seen more definitely at a little distance, and reminded me over and over again of constellations. . . . And when I got to the edge of the ravine, and commanded the steep and far ridges of the higher Jura, there was a hawk sailing slowly along the opposite cliff, just off the brow of it so as to get the deep river under him, and the solemn roar of the water came up from beneath, mixed with the singing of the thrushes among the pine branches. I felt it more than usual, but it struck me suddenly how utterly different the impression of such a scene would be, if it were in a strange land, and in one without history; how dear to the feeling is the pine of Switzerland compared to that of Canada. I have allowed too little weight to these deep sympathies, for I think if that pine forest had been among the Alleghenys, or if the stream had been Niagara, I should only have looked at them with intense melancholy and desire for home."

From Champagnole they went by Geneva and Turin to Vercelli and the Lakes, and thence to Venice and Florence; afterwards staying some time at Vevay and Chamouni (where Ruskin had the pleasure of meeting Acland on his wedding-journey), and then home by Troyes and Châtillon-sur-Seine. At Venice he was already busy with elaborate measurements of the buildings. He filled many pages, too, with notes on Willis's recently-published *Architecture of the Middle Ages*. He was reading also Woods' *Letters of an Architect*. Points which he afterwards developed in *The Seven Lamps* were already occurring to him. Thus, it was during this tour that he was struck by the system of intersectional mouldings, which he discussed at length in that book as a principal source of corruption in Gothic architecture. On this tour of 1846, he was as absorbed in sections and mouldings as formerly in flowers and rocks, and as busy in drawing doors and windows as once in making sketches

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of skies and mountains. But one member of the party felt serious disappointment in this diversion of interest. Ruskin had dwelt with pleasurable anticipation upon the prospect of initiating his parents into the beauties of Italian Gothic. But his father, who was becoming an old man, had not the mental agility which enabled his son to turn so easily from one enthusiasm to another. Father and son "had been entirely of one mind about the carved porches of Abbeville and living pictures of Vandyck; but when my father now found himself required to admire also flat walls, striped like the striped calico of an American flag, and oval-eyed saints like the figures on a Chinese teacup, he grew restive." And the son grew impatient. One afternoon as they were driving past the chapel of La Spina at Pisa, the father, waking out of a reverie, asked suddenly, "John, what shall I give the coachman?" "Whereupon I, instead of telling him what he asked me, as I ought to have done with much complacency at being referred to on the matter, took upon me with impatience to reprove, and lament over, my father's hardness of heart in thinking at that moment of sublunary affairs. And the spectral Spina of that chapel has stayed in my own heart ever since." A letter from the elder Ruskin to his friend W. H. Harrison, among whose papers it has been found, shows the difference in the point of view between father and son:—

"He is cultivating art at present (Venice, May 25, 1846), searching for real knowledge, but to you and me this is at present a sealed book. It will neither take the shape of picture nor poetry. It is gathered in scraps hardly wrought, for he is drawing perpetually, but no drawing such as in former days you or I might compliment in the usual way by saying it deserved a frame; but fragments of everything from a Cupola to a Cart-wheel, but in such bits that it is to the common eye a mass of Hieroglyphics—all true—Truth itself but Truth in mosaic."

The writer's habitual good sense hits off in a happy phrase the somewhat disjointed nature of Ruskin's studies, and the letter is not without its note of pathos to the sympathetic ear. The father had hoped to see his son

become a Bishop, and the Church had been given up; to see him become a second Byron, and poetry was now written no more. He had made some mark with his drawings, and now he only did architectural jottings. *Modern Painters* was winning for him a literary reputation; yet he showed no disposition to finish the book. It does not appear, however, that Ruskin had as yet determined on casting his architectural studies into the form of a separate essay. They seem to have been originally intended for a part or a section in *Modern Painters*. That book, however, made no progress. His literary production during the next two years (1847, 1848) was small. He suffered a good deal from ill-health, and there were distractions.

II

On his return from the Continent, Ruskin was still much occupied, as his note-books show, with architectural studies; he spent much time also at the British Museum among the illuminated manuscripts and the natural history collections (not then removed to South Kensington). The circle of his friends, acquaintances, and correspondents was now enlarging; his literary reputation was becoming more extended as the circulation of *Modern Painters* increased. He was often to be seen at Rogers's breakfast table, paying respectful homage in the presence of gracious condescension. With another, and a very different, literary personage of the day—Mary Russell Mitford—he now formed a friendship, which was to be one of the chief solaces of her declining years. Ruskin has described her among the circle of modest authors, in the days of the *Annuals*, who were within his ken, through his "first editor," W. H. Harrison—"merry Miss Mitford, actually living in the country, actually walking in it, loving it."[1] To her studies of country life, and of children,[2] he attached no small importance in literary history. Her writings, he said, "have the playfulness and purity of the *Vicar of Wakefield* without the naughtiness of

[1] "My First Editor," reprinted in *On the Old Road*.

[2] *Art of England*, § 109.

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its occasional wit, or the dust of the world's great road on the other side of the hedge."[1] She, on her part, was an early admirer of *Modern Painters*. Ruskin had first been to see her in January 1847. "Have you read an Oxford Graduate's letters on Art?" she wrote to a friend (January 27). "The author, Mr. Ruskin, was here last week, and is certainly the most charming person I have ever known. The books are very beautiful, although I do not agree in all the opinions; but the young man himself is just what if one had a son one should have dreamt of his turning out, in mind, manner, conversation, everything."[2] The visit was repeated; and Miss Mitford was more and more delighted with him. "He has been here two or three times," she wrote (July 26): "he is by far the most eloquent and interesting young man that I have ever seen—grace itself and sweetness."[3]

Of the personal appearance of the "interesting young man" who thus won Miss Mitford's heart, the best likeness is the full-length portrait in water-colour by George Richmond, reproduced as frontispiece to this volume. It shows a tall and slightly-built figure, clad in the ample frock-coat and blue stock, which he always wore, the head surmounted by abundant brown hair. He is sitting, as Ruskin said in describing the portrait, "at a picturesque desk in the open air, in a crimson waistcoat and white trousers, with a magnificent port-crayon in my hand, and Mont Blanc, conventionalised to Raphaelesque grace, in the distance." The artist amid these pictorial graces did not miss the characteristic hand, with its long, thin, and tapering fingers.

Miss Mitford was sixty when Ruskin first met her, she was in poor health, and not overburdened with worldly goods. Her *Recollections of a Literary Life*, published in 1852, concluded with a chapter on Ruskin, and in it she said: "My most kind friend Mr. Ruskin will understand why I connect his name with the latest event that has befallen me, the leaving the cottage that for thirty years had been my shelter." His thoughtful kindness did much, in divers little

[1] Letter to Miss Mitford (April 22, 1854).

[2] *The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford*, vol. ii. p. 107.

[3] *Letters of Mary Russell Mitford*, Second Series, vol. i. p. 233.

ways, we are told, to cheer her closing years. He sent her every book that would interest and every delicacy that would strengthen her. At the time of his first acquaintance with Miss Mitford, she had become lame, as the result of a fall, and he wrote a letter of condolence:— CHAP. X.

"[Denmark Hill] *Saturday*, 19*th June* [1847].—My dear Madam,—You will not, I am sure, doubt the regret with which I received your last kind letter, informing me both of the disappointment I must myself sustain and of its cause, so trying to you yourself. I do indeed sympathise most deeply in the sorrow (it can hardly but reach what may without exaggeration be so called) which your present privation must cause you, especially coming in the time of spring—your favourite season—a punishment certainly far too heavy to be connected by you in thought with any such gossamer-bodied sin as that in which you say you were once entangled, the vanity of long walks; for which vanity, if all guilty of it were to be shut up in doubting castles, without keys, their cramps taking them—(I beg pardon for mixing in this heterogeneous manner the giant and his prey)—I fear that it would be soon said of each and all of us walkers that 'nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.' In fact, is it right to think of any misfortune in the world (except such as are necessarily and legally connected with every sin—mortification with vanity, and lameness with over-exertion) as sent as punishment at all? Do not twenty miseries come for a *purpose* for one that comes for a punishment? After all, though your feet are in the stocks, you have the Silas spirit, and the doors will open in the mid-darkness. . . .

"I leave town on Tuesday, in order to be of what use I may—Heaven only knows—at the meeting of the British Association, whence, returning, I hope to stop at Reading and to find you—out. Afterwards I am going to Scotland to stay quietly with a very dear friend, in a cottage—a little worse than a cottage—at the side of Loch Tay. I need this, for I have most foolishly accepted evening invitations, and made morning calls, these last four months, until I am fevered by the friction. I have done no good, incurred many obligations, and suffered an incalculable harm. I know not what is the matter with me, but the people seem to have put a chill on me, and taken my life out of me."

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Among the distractions referred to in this letter were receptions in Park Street by Lady Davy, one of the leaders of literary society in that day. At her house, Ruskin used to meet Miss Charlotte Lockhart, who became to him "a Scottish fairy, White Lady, and witch of the fatallest sort, looking as if she had just risen out of the stream in Rhymer's Glen." "But I never could contrive," he adds "to come to any serious speech with her." Lockhart, however, had invited Ruskin to write upon Lord Lindsay's *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*. He accepted the invitation less for the sake of the editor than for that of his daughter. "With my usual wisdom in such matters," he says, "I went away into Cumberland to recommend myself to her by writing a *Quarterly* review." His father, who knew his son's hopes and fondly counted on their success, had already been looking out for a suitable house in the Lake District, where Ruskin and Scott's grand-daughter might establish themselves. In March 1847 Ruskin settled down at the Salutation Inn, Ambleside, then a country inn in a country village, with George as his companion, to write the review. But the sentences would not come readily, and Ruskin fell into a state of despondency of which, he tells us, he knew not the like again till fourteen years afterwards.[1] The review which appeared in the *Quarterly* for June 1847 gave Ruskin occasion to cover ground which he had already traversed in the second volume of *Modern Painters*, and was presently to occupy in *The Seven Lamps*. Lockhart, he says, cut out all his best bits, and objected to a criticism of Gally Knight, on the ground that he was a protégé of Albemarle Street.[2] As for Miss Lockhart, the review, good, bad, or indifferent, elicited no encouraging response from her whatever; which was not surprising, for her interests were engaged elsewhere. The review is a somewhat laboured piece; and besides, on August 19, 1847, she married J. R. Hope (Hope-Scott). In June Ruskin had gone up to Oxford, as we have heard, to act as Secretary of the Geological Section of the British Association. His despondency was

[1] See Vol. II. chap. ii.

[2] Ruskin published his suppressed criticism in *Stones of Venice*: see Library Ed., vol. ix. p. 431.

increasing, and there is a note of nervous strain in his letters :— CHAP. X.

(*To his Father.*) "*June* 27, 1847.—I am not able to write a full account of all I see, to amuse you, for I find it necessary to keep as quiet as I can, and I fear it would only annoy you to be told of all the invitations I refuse, and all the interesting matters in which I take no part. There is nothing for it but throwing one's self into the stream, and going down with one's arms under water, ready to be carried anywhere, or do anything. My friends are all busy, and tired to death. All the members of my section, but especially Forbes, Sedgwick, Murchison, and Lord Northampton—and of course Buckland, are as kind to me as men can be; but I am tormented by the perpetual feeling of being in everybody's way. The recollections of the place, too, and the being in my old rooms, make me very miserable. I have not one moment of profitably spent time to look back to while I was here, and much useless labour and disappointed hope; and I can neither bear the excitement of being in the society where the play of mind is constant, and rolls *over* me like heavy wheels, nor the pain of being alone. I get away in the evenings into the hayfields about Cumnor, and rest; but then my failing sight plagues me. I cannot look at anything as I used to do, and the evening sky is covered with swimming strings and eels. My best time is while I am in the Section room, for though it is hot, and sometimes wearisome, yet I have nothing to *say*—little to do,—nothing to look at, and as much as I like to hear."

An election was pending at this time. At the dissolution in June 1847 Gladstone stood for the first time for the University of Oxford, and Ruskin was persuaded by his friend Richard Greswell of Worcester to join Gladstone's Committee. It is an indication of the repute already won by the author of *Modern Painters* that the Oxford chairman was "sure that Mr. Gladstone would appreciate at its full value the support of such high personal merit and extraordinary natural genius."[1] The two men had met at Lady Davy's dinner-table, where they disputed across Miss

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. i. p. 329.

CHAP. X. Lockhart over Neapolitan prisons: Mr. Gladstone couldn't see, explains Ruskin, that the real prisoners were the persons outside.[1]

III

It was not surprising that the receipt of Ruskin's letter from Oxford, with its account of swimming strings and eels, convinced his parents that his health needed serious attention. He was sent accordingly, as in 1841, to Leamington for a month's "cure" under Dr. Jephson. There he occupied himself with miscellaneous reading; and with much study, by drawing and analysis, of botanical detail, and with inner questionings on the foundations of a religious faith now first becoming shaken. The courses of his thought, and of his physical state, from nervous listlessness to some re-establishment of vigour, are shown in his letters and diary:—

(*Diary.*) "Leamington, *July* 29.—As I was walking down the chief street this afternoon, somewhat languid—partly owing to the weather, and partly to a disappointment in the ill-success of a laboured drawing, and partly from causes unknown, I could not help looking into the stationers' windows for some book to amuse me, though I have now on the table *The Guardian* and *Pamela*, and *I Promessi Sposi*, besides Wordsworth and Dante, and several books on chemistry, and a *Quarterly*, and Eastlake's book on oil painting, and George Herbert and Plato. All these came into my mind, and at the same time, very reproachfully, Wordsworth's account of the poor clergyman, Robert Walker, who 'allowed not a moment of recreation except upon a Saturday afternoon, when he indulged himself with a Newspaper, or sometimes with a Magazine.' What a foretaste of Paradise to such a man would this room of mine be, this leisure and these books! So I walked past all the stationers, resolved not to encourage any more this continually increasing volatility and listlessness; and yet so far, I have thought since I came home, that much of the poor clergyman's time being given to labour in the field, and the rest to matters interesting to heart and conscience, left no

[1] *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 51.

room for the peculiar lassitude, which continual book occupation can hardly but induce. I will not buy any more books, but I am not sure that I am very wrong in wishing to do so."

(*Diary.*) "*Aug.* 7.—It was cold and dark and gusty and raining by fits, at two o'clock to-day, and until four; but I went out, determined to have my walk, get wet or no. I took the road to the village where I had been the first day with Macdonald, and about a mile and a half out, I was driven by the rain into a little cottage. . . . It had rained hard while I stayed in the cottage, but had ceased when I went on, and presently appeared such a bright bar of streaky sky in the west, seen over the glittering hedges, as made my heart leap again, it put so much of old feelings into me of far-away hills and fountains of morning light; and the sun came out presently, and every shake of the trees shook down more light upon the grass. And so I came to the village and stood leaning on the churchyard gate, looking at the sheep nibbling and resting among the graves (newly watered they lay, and fresh, like a field of precious seed). One narrow stream of light ran in ups and downs across them, but the shadow of the church fell over most—the pretty little grey church, now one dark mass against the intense golden glittering sky; and to make it sweeter still, the churchyard itself rose steeply, so that its own grand line came against this same light at last."

(*To* GEORGE RICHMOND.) "LEAMINGTON, *Aug.* 16. . . . I am packing up to leave for Dunbar and Tantallon—only stopping at Kenilworth to finish some ivy stalks to-morrow. I am indeed better at last—thanks to the perfect rest I have had here—and my thoughts and faith are returning to me. I have had great good from dissecting some water-plants out of the canal. My eyes do not seem to serve me very well, but they are better than nine pairs out of ten, and I am very thankful to have such, and to have Jephson's authority on two points—first, that there *is* nothing whatever the matter with me that I cannot conquer by quiet, regularity, and exercise; and secondly, that there is nothing which *may not soon* be the matter with me, if I go much into society or sit up at night. Acland *does* look very happy, and I am sure he is; but Mrs. Aclands are not to be found every day—nor to be won—except by Dr. Aclands; nor Mrs. Richmonds neither. Thank you for your kind affection. . . ."

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The entry from the diary of Aug. 7 was included in *Præterita*, and greatly moved one of Ruskin's later friends. "I think even you," wrote Miss Francesca Alexander, "hardly ever wrote anything so beautiful as the description of the country church and graveyard at sunset, which has stayed in my mind all day, no matter what I have been doing, as if I had seen some beautiful picture."

The Macdonald mentioned in the diary—William Macdonald Farquharson Macdonald—was a Scottish laird, a youth now of some two-and-twenty, owner of large properties in Perthshire, and zealous in the Scottish Evangelical faith. He had visited occasionally with his mother—an old friend of Ruskin's father—at Denmark Hill, and had taken a strong liking to Ruskin. He chanced to be staying at Leamington at this time, also under Dr. Jephson's care, and he made Ruskin promise to visit him in the autumn at his shooting lodge, Crossmount, at the foot of Schehallion, between Lochs Rannoch and Tummel. Ruskin went to Scotland, and the mood of depression still hung upon him:—

(*To* W. H. Harrison.) "Dunbar, *August* 20. . . . I am very much obliged to you for the serious part of your letter as well as the jest of it—though most grieved to hear your report of our present parliament. What we shall come to I cannot guess. I find the laws of the crabs and limpets unchanged, and confine my studies to their permanent politics—and their foundational principles of pinch hard and hold fast. I am much better since I left London, getting regular exercise and rest. I hope I shall not again fall into the state I was in all this winter, grievous to myself and stupid to everybody. Still there is a certain amount of spleen, or what else it may more justly be called, mingled with my present feelings which I cannot shake off. I cannot understand how you merry people can smile through the world as you do. It seems to me a sad one—more suffering than pleasure in it, and less of *hope* than of either—at least if the interpretations set by the most pious people on the Bible be true, and if not, then worse still. But it is woeful to see these poor fishermen toiling all night and bringing in a few casks of herrings each, twice a week or so, and lying watching their nets dry on the cliffs all day;

their wives and children abused and dirty—scolding, fighting, and roaring through their unvarying lives. How much more enviable the sea-gulls that, all this stormy day, have been tossing themselves off and on the crags and winds like flakes of snow, and screaming with very joy."

(*To his Father.*) "DUNKELD, *Wednesday Evening* (*25th August*, 1847).—I intended staying here till I heard from Macdonald, for it is *very* beautiful, but I must go on. I feel so utterly downhearted to-night that I must get away to-morrow without going out again, for I am afraid of something seizing me in the state of depression. I never had a more beautiful or half so unhappy a walk as this afternoon; it is so very different from Switzerland and Cumberland that it revives all sorts of old feelings at their very source—and yet in a dead form, like ghosts—and I feel myself so changed, and everything else so ancient, and so the same in its ancientness, that, together with the name, and fear, and neighbourhood of the place, I can't bear it. . . ."

From Dunkeld Ruskin went on to his friend at Crossmount. A day with the guns on Schehallion was perhaps the only experience of sport in Ruskin's life. He did not enjoy the bags of hares; and betook himself instead to "the laborious eradication of a crop of thistles which had been too successfully grown by northern agriculture in one of the best bits of unboggy ground by the Tummel." The days thus spent at Crossmount are "among the few in my life," he says, "which I remember with entire serenity, as being certain I could have spent them no better." He had stubb'd his bit of Thornaby waste. And there "in the thistlefield of Crossmount" he had "wise thoughts and wholesome sleep after them." Those thoughts "are scattered afterwards up and down in *Fors* and *Munera Pulveris*." Nor are they absent from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, in which book we may find the germs of his later teaching in the political economy of art, and catch the first sound of waves of thought and feeling on social questions, afterwards to reverberate more loud and clear.

Ruskin had recovered some health and spirit; but he had written querulously to his father, recalling among other

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things his grievance about Turner's "Splügen" (p. 126). The father's reply illustrates the elder man's character:—

"(FOLKESTONE, *4th Oct.*, 1847.)—I have already said that the tone of your later letters was so much more cheerful and confiding, and expressive of some, if not continued, at least frequent snatches of enjoyment, that they were most agreeable. . . . A few letters rather dulled my spirits, for they disclosed that, more than I had had an idea of, we had been, from defects perhaps on both sides, in a state of 'progression by antagonism,'[1] each discerning half the truth, and supposing it the whole. I suppose we may have mutually defrauded each other's character of its right and merit. In some of these letters I read more of the suffering and unpleasantness I had unwittingly in part inflicted on you in past hours. To my memory they are burdened with no greater share of troubles than attaches, I believe, to most families since the fall. I have, however, no fear for the future, for tho' I have no prospect of becoming greatly changed, a circumstance has made me reflect that I was exceedingly wrong and short-sighted in all interruptions occasioned to your pursuits. Mama says I am very exacting, and so I was about the Book-revising, but never more after it was done. Whilst reading now this unlucky first volume for press I had by me some loose proof sheets for second, and I have been so struck with the superiority of second volume, and so positively surprised at the work, that I became angry with myself for having by my impatience and obstinacy about the one thing in any way checked the flight or embarrassed the course of thoughts like these, and arrested such a mind in its progress in the track and through the means which to itself seemed best for aiming at its ends. You will find me from conviction done with asking you to do anything not thought proper by yourself to do. I call this reading with profit and to the purpose. Two points in your letters I only remember half-distressed me, and perhaps they were merely illustrative as used by you. You say we could not by a whole summer give you a tenth of the pleasure that to have left you a month in the Highlands in 1838 would have done, nor by buying Turner and Windus's gallery the pleasure that two Turners would have done in 1842, you having passed two or three years with a sick longing for

[1] A reference to the title of Lord Lindsay's Essay reviewed by Ruskin in the *Quarterly*.

Turner. I take blame to myself for not sending you to the Highlands in 1838 and not buying you a few more Turners; but the first I was not at all aware of, and the second I freely confess I have been restrained in from my very constitutional prudence. . . . I have, you know, my dearest John, two things to do, to indulge you and to leave you and Mama comfortably provided for . . . but if you have any longings like 1842 I should still be glad to know them, whilst I honour you for the delicacy of before suppressing the expression of them. . . . On the subject noticed in one of your letters on our different regard for public opinion, this is a malady or weakness with me, arising from want of self-respect. The latter causes much of my ill-temper, and when from misunderstanding or want of information I was losing some respect for you my temper got doubly bad. We are all wanting in our relations towards the Supreme Being, the only source of peace and self-respect. But I never can open my soul to human beings on holy subjects. . . ."

Such a letter may well have touched the son. He was presently to please his father and mother in a matter upon which their hearts were set.

Ruskin returned from Scotland in October, and the winter of 1847–48 was spent quietly at Denmark Hill. His only literary production was a second review for the *Quarterly*—this time, of Sir Charles Eastlake's *Materials for a History of Oil Painting*. The essay broke little new ground, though his diaries show that Ruskin read up the subject diligently. For the rest, his months were spent in various branches of study, with a view to the continuation of *Modern Painters*. The architectural reading was continued; and his note-books show that at this time he made a minute study of Homer, which he afterwards turned to account in the chapter on "Classical Landscape" in the third volume of *Modern Painters*. His drawing—now mostly devoted to trees, leaves, and flowers—was also steadily practised:—

"While my father, as was his custom, read to my mother and me for half-an-hour after breakfast, I always had a fresh-gathered outer spray of a tree before me, of which the mode of growth, with a single leaf full size, had to be done at that sitting in fine pen

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outline, filled with the simple colour of the leaf at one wash. On fine days, when the grass was dry, I used to lie down on it and draw the blades as they grew, with the ground herbage of buttercup or hawkweed mixed among them, until every square foot of meadow, or mossy bank, became an infinite picture and possession to me, and the grace and adjustment to each other of growing leaves, a subject of more curious interest to me than the composition of any painter's master-piece."

IV

The entries in Ruskin's diary are at this time few and far between. The explanation is given in an entry on December 22, 1847: "My diary has of late been in letters to E. C. G." The initials stand for Euphemia Chalmers Gray. She was the eldest daughter of Mr. George Gray, a lawyer, of Bowerswell, Perth, who was an old friend of Ruskin's parents. She used to visit them at Herne Hill, and it was for her that Ruskin had written his *King of the Golden River*. She was a child at that time; and having heard of the young man's literary gifts, had challenged him to write a story. To a manuscript copy of the story in the handwriting of the Effie for whom it was written there is appended in Ruskin's hand a set of verses by him which, under the title "Charitie," have appeared in many forms. In the manuscript they are entitled "A Morning Hymn of the Treasure Valley." At the end of the story Gluck, the third brother, "went and dwelt in the valley, and the poor were never driven from his door," and "thus the Treasure Valley became a garden again, and the inheritance, which had been lost by cruelty, was regained by Love":—

"The beams of morning are renewed,
The valley laughs their light to see;
And earth is bright with gratitude,
And heaven with Charitie."

The story was published in 1851, with illustrations by Richard Doyle, and attained an immediate popularity which it has ever since retained, both in England and in America. It has appeared in numerous forms, and has reached the

penny libraries. It has been translated into German, Italian, and Welsh. It has been adopted as a Board School prize-book in England, and as a lesson-book in the United States. Looking back upon this early work, Ruskin noted in it an absence of invention; but, for the rest, it was "a fairly good imitation of Grimm and Dickens, mixed with a little true Alpine feeling of my own."[1] Grimm had been his familiar companion from very early years, and each new part or book by Dickens was "altogether precious and admirable" to him and his father. The grotesque and the German setting of the tale were taken from Grimm; from Dickens it took its tone of pervading kindliness and geniality. The Alpine ecstasy and the eager pressing of the moral were Ruskin's own; and so also is the style, delicately poised between poetry and comedy.

The King of the Golden River, written in 1841, is a prelude to the story of Ruskin's marriage. Six years later, at which time we have now arrived, Miss Gray had again been a visitor at Denmark Hill. Ruskin was her senior by ten years in age, and by much more in habits of life and thought. She was a beautiful girl, of a bright and cheerful disposition, and, unlike the Adèle of earlier time, showed a sympathetic interest in Ruskin's literary and artistic pursuits. He was much interested in her, showed her pictures, and took pleasure in cultivating her taste and improving her mind. It was for her in 1847 that he wrote the verses which have been printed under the title "For a Birthday in May":—

"Thorn, and meadow grass—sweet sister,
Twine them as I may,
Deemest thou a darksome garland
For thy natal day?
Thou thyself art fairer, sister,
Than all the flowers of May;
Had I brought thee buds and blossoms,
Shamed were I and they!

Think not of their grace, sweet sister,
Nor their colours gay,
Since their utmost glory, sister,
Is to pass away.

Grasses of the field, sweet sister,
And the wreaths they bind,
Though they deck the depth of summer,

[1] *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 64.

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Dread no winter wind.
Though the thrilling frost, sister,
Though the sleet-storm blind,
These to earth and all her creatures
Are for ever kind;
And let us remember, sister,
With a quiet mind,
Even thorns are fair, sister,
With the heaven behind.

May that happy path, sister,
Evermore be thine,
Through the mighty Shepherd's pasture
And by streams divine!
May all earthly sun, sweet sister,
On thy journeying shine,—
Though perhaps there may be sister,
Shadows upon mine!
Kindly He for all, dear sister,
Will the end design,
Who for both our sakes, sister,
Brooked the Spear and Spine."

This may have been a love poem, or it may not. But Ruskin's parents argued from their son's attentions that he was in love. His mother was intent on making the match, which indeed, for various reasons, was equally desired by the parents on both sides. Ruskin was developing signs of morbid depression; his affairs of the heart had hitherto been unsuccessful; here, in the bright and pretty daughter of their old friends, seemed the very companion best suited to cure his despondency; here, too, the very means for them to gain a daughter and not lose a son. Ruskin proposed, was accepted, and the ceremony of marriage took place at Bowerswell on April 10, 1848.

The honeymoon was spent in the Lake District, and thence Ruskin wrote thus to Miss Mitford:—

"Keswick, *Good Friday* (*April* 21, 1848[1]).—My dear Miss Mitford,—The pain of deep self-reproach was mixed with the delight which your letter gave me yesterday. Two months back I was each day on the point of writing to you to ask you for your sympathy—the kindest and keenest sympathy that, I think, ever filled the breadth and depth of an unselfish heart. But my purpose was variously stayed, chiefly, as I remember, by the events on the Continent, fraught to me with very deep disappointment, and casting me into a depression and fever of spirit which, joined with some other circumstances nearer home, have, until now that I am resting with my kind wife among these quiet hills, denied me the

[1] Wrongly dated 1853 in the *Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford*, and the error has misled various biographers of Ruskin into mistaken deductions.

heart to write cheerfully to those very dear friends to whom I would fain never write sadly. And now your letter comes, with all its sweetness and all its sting. . . . But you are better and the spring is come, and I hope, for I am sure you will allow me, to bring my young wife to be rejoiced (under the shadow of her new and grievous lot) by your kind comforting. But pray keep her out of your garden, or she will certainly lose her wits with pure delight, or perhaps insist on staying with you and letting me find my way through the world by myself, a task which I should not *now* like to undertake. I should be very, very happy just now but for these wild storm-clouds bursting on my dear Italy and my fair France, my occupation gone, and all my earthly treasures (except the one I have justacquired and the everlasting Alps) periled amidst 'the tumult of the people,' the 'imagining of vain things.' Ah, my dear Miss Mitford, see what your favourite 'Bérangers' and 'Gerald Griffins' do![1] But these are thoughts as selfish as they are narrow. I begin to feel that all the work I have been doing, and all the loves I have been cherishing, are ineffective and frivolous—that these are not times for watching clouds or dreaming over quiet waters, that more serious work is to be done, and that the time for endurance has come rather than for meditation, and for hope rather than for happiness. Happy those whose hope, without this severe and tearful rending away of all the props and stability of earthly enjoyments, has been fixed 'where the wicked cease from troubling.' Mine was not; it was based on 'those pillars of the earth' which are 'astonished at His reproof. . . .'

"My wife begs me to return her sincere thanks for your kind message, and to express to you the delight with which she looks

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[1] The Irish poet Gerald Griffin (1803–40) is the subject of ch. vi. in vol. iii. of Miss Mitford's *Recollections of a Literary Life*. A letter from Miss Mitford (to Mrs. Browning of July 30, 1848) records a visit from Ruskin and a story about her favourite Béranger. "When Lamartine was in London a few years ago Mr. Rogers asked him, with strong interest, to give him some details about Béranger, 'the greatest French poet.' 'Ah! Béranger,' said M. de Lamartine, 'he made advances to me, and of course wished for my acquaintance; but he is a sort of man with whom I do not choose to have any connexion!' Think of that! Mr. Rogers told the story himself, with the greatest indignation, to the Ruskins, and they told it to me" (*Life of Mary Russell Mitford*, vol. iii. p. 211).

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forward to being presented to you—remembering what I told her among some of my first pleadings with her that, whatever faults she might discover in her husband, he could at least promise her friends whom she would have every cause to love and to honour. She needs them, but I think also deserves them.—Ever, my dear Miss Mitford, believe me, faithfully and affectionately yours, J. Ruskin."

Ruskin's letter reflects, it will be seen, the excitement caused by the events of '48, when men opened their newspapers each day wondering what fresh revolution would have broken out and what other king have gone into exile. In Italy Charles Albert had declared war upon Austria and pushed his troops beyond the Mincio. The fortune of war, which was to give the victory to the Austrians under Radetsky, was still uncertain, when Ruskin wrote as follows to George Richmond:—

"Denmark Hill, 1*st of May*. . . . I found on my return home with my wife on Thursday your drawing of my father placed opposite me in my own little study, and it is quite impossible to tell you how happy I am every moment in looking at it, nor how much it wins from me of fresh affection and admiration every day. I am but just beginning to understand it, and to see what you have put into it, and *now* I am glad that you chose that look of gentleness rather than the more frequent (*not* more characteristic) gloom or severity, for the portrait is becoming more and more alive every day, and it gladdens me to see my father smiling on me. I am coming to see you as soon as I can. I have been committing and causing my wife to commit all kinds of breaches of etiquette, sending no cards to any one to begin with. I daresay I shall bring her to see you some day soon, and Mrs. Richmond, which I suppose will be another, but a more pardonable one. When will you come and see me, and tell me whether it is of any use to write or think about painting any more, now, or whether there will be no painting to be loved but that 'which more becomes a man than gilt his trophy'? I feel very doubtful whether I am not wasting my life, and very sad about all. Alas poor Milan, and my beloved spire, and now Verona in the thick of it. . . .'

Ruskin had interrupted his honeymoon to correct the proofs

of a second edition of *Modern Painters* (vol. ii.) which were awaiting him at Denmark Hill. These despatched, he took his wife to Commemoration at Oxford, and they then started on what was intended to be "a pilgrimage to the English Shrines."[1] Salisbury was selected for the starting-point, and there the young couple were joined by Ruskin's father and mother—not the wisest arrangement in the world, one may think. A tour of the English Cathedrals is the ideal honeymoon for Miss Yonge's heroes and heroines, and Sarum is associated with *The Angel in the House;* but Ruskin's interest was not so much in ecclesiastical or domestic sentiment as in architectural measurements. "My son," wrote his father to Harrison, "occupies himself with the architecture of the Cathedral, a lovely edifice, but I find it very slow." How hard Ruskin worked is shown by many pages of notes and measurements in his diary. The fruits of his labour are to be seen in many pages of his next book; but he was overtaken by a feverish attack, and the projected tour to other cathedrals, and to the abbeys, of England had to be abandoned. The family party returned to Denmark Hill, and Ruskin was laid up by his mother in pillows and coverlets. He was not, however, to be put off his cathedrals altogether, and, as soon as he had recovered, he started with his wife for a tour in Normandy, which resulted in the writing, immediately afterwards, of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.*

[1] Preface to the first edition of *The Seven Lamps.*

CHAPTER XI

THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE

(1848–1849)

> "The book I have called *The Seven Lamps* was to show that certain right states of temper and moral feeling were the magic powers by which all good architecture had been produced."—*Crown of Wild Olive.*

"I WENT to Boulogne," wrote Ruskin's father to Harrison, "and saw my son and his wife off by rail to Abbeville, where he is in his element among cathedrals and tumble-down houses." This account of the matter is borne out by Ruskin's own letters and diaries. The tour began at Abbeville on August 8, 1848, and ended, with Gisors, Amiens, and Paris, on October 24. Every day of the eleven weeks was spent in measuring, note-taking, sketching. Now that Ruskin had again found definite occupation, all his old enthusiasm revived, and he worked indefatigably and with concentration. He was up at 6, he tells his father, to read before breakfast which was at 8. By 9.30 he was seated in some corner convenient for sketching, or was busy with his measuring rules and note-books. Dinner was at 1.30, and again from 4 to 6 he was sketching. A "couple of crockets" would sometimes occupy him for "upwards of an hour." His companions were pressed into the service. There was no time for amusement, as a young girl might have understood it. She could post up the diary; and even George had to supplement his valeting by tracing as best he might bas-reliefs and panels. Ruskin was in a fever to make the most of the time, and to record the beauties that he saw while yet the stones were standing the one on the other. The book which embodied his studies was called by a reviewer of the time "a

hymn to architectural loveliness"; the rapture which colours the pages of the book appears also in his daily letters home, and the country delighted him no less than the churches:— CHAP. XI.

(*To his Father.*) "ABBEVILLE, *Aug.* 8.—It is most fortunate that I have come here, straight from Salisbury—not even blunting at Winchester the *severe* memory of that Gothic; for, much as I admired Abbeville porch before, it comes upon me now in suchs *luscious* richness,—so full, so fantastic,—so exquisitely picturesque that I seem never to have seen it before. . . .

"(*Aug.* 9.)—I was dancing round the table this forenoon, in rapture with the porch here—far beyond all my memories or anticipation—perfectly superb, and all the houses more fantastic, more exquisite than ever; alas! not all, for there is not a street without fatal marks of restoration, and in twenty years it is plain that not a vestige of Abbeville, or indeed of any old French town, will be left. . . . I seem born to conceive what I cannot execute, recommend what I cannot obtain, and mourn over what I cannot save."

(*To his Father.*) "LISIEUX, *Aug.* 23.—You never saw anything yet in France so lovely as this Normandy—just fancy vallies like rich bits of Italy, tufted with elm, poplar, willow, and Spanish chestnut, set between round sweeping grouse hills of purple heather, as bare as Schehallion. I think Effie makes the heather grow under her feet. But I never saw such a lovely contrast of purple and green; even in Switzerland, where we have the rose, the green is blacker and not so soft."

The entries in his note-books are severely technical and laboriously detailed. Every church that he visited was described and measured, with accompanying sketches or memoranda. These diaries, note-books, and sketches show very forcibly that Ruskin's generalisations were founded upon minute study of particular instances. The "personal observation" of which he spoke in the first preface to *The Seven Lamps* as justifying his essay was long and minute. Industrious and indefatigable though he was, Ruskin still

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felt at the end of his tour that he was only beginning to learn:—

(*To his Father.*) "Rouen, *Oct.* 15.—I still feel that I leave this place Unseen; this is partly, however, owing to my slowness in taking in; I cannot grasp it; every time I walk into the Square it is new to me. Still I verily believe that I now know more about it than any English architect, and than most French, and I have improved in my drawing in these three months considerably."

In Rouen, as in many other cities of France and Italy, the memory of Ruskin's visits long survived in sacristans who love their buildings. "It may be," says Mr. Theodore Andrea Cook in his account of St. Ouen, "that the old Sacristan, for your good fortune, will be living still to tell you of the greatest Englishman he has ever heard of, John Ruskin, who often looked into that quaint mirror of Holy Water, and watched the strange reflection of the arches soaring upwards in the nave."[1]

Ruskin's visit to France was during a time of much political excitement. Louis Philippe had been driven out early in the year, and the Republic proclaimed on the basis of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" and with the promise to find work for all. Reaction against the system of national workshops led to the revolt of eastern Paris in June, and the four days' battle of the barricades. Thiers assumed the leadership of the party of reaction in the Assembly, and events were drifting towards the election of Louis Napoleon as President. A careful reader of *The Seven Lamps* will mark more than one passage in the book as coloured by the revolutionary events which were passing almost under Ruskin's eyes. The impressions and reflections which they suggested, leading him into many questionings of the foundations alike of politics and of religion, appear in his letters:—

(*To his Father.*) "Lisieux, *24th August.*—As I have been more delighted than ever with this country, I have been more disgusted

[1] *The Story of Rouen*, 1899, p. 240.

than ever with its inhabitants—not but that we have met with sensible and agreeable people, and that *all* are *so far* sensible that we have not spoken to one person who does not regret all that has lately happened of tumult and disorder, for the substantial reason that all have suffered for it. But the mental and moral degradation are beyond all I conceived—it is the very reign of sin, and of idiotism. It has made me think something more seriously than usual of all the old difficulties which so often have arisen in men's minds respecting God's government of this world, and many other difficulties which stand in the way of one's faith. I believe that you, as well as I, are in this same condition, are you not, father? Neither of us *can* believe, read what we may of reasoning or of proof; and I tell you also frankly that the more I investigate and reason over the Bible as I should over any other history or statement, the more difficulties I find, and the less ground of belief; and this I say after six years of very patient work of this kind, at least in those hours set apart for such study.

"Now, this is very painful—especially so, it seems to me, in a time like the present, full of threatening, and in which wickedness is so often victorious and unpunished; nothing but sorrow can come from a doubtful state of mind even in this world. I was reading, too, those opening thoughts of Pascal in which he assumes that there is no proof of there being a God; but, as he has a right also to assume, that there is no proof of there being *none*—(certainly the difficulties on that side are quite as great as on the other)—and there shows the utter absurdity, in the state of *equal chance*, of *not* risking our *all*, our life, conduct, etc., on the chance of there being a good God—for if there be, the gain is infinite; and if not, the loss is nothing. Now, I think this is good logic, and I began to consider what we have to risk on that side. Pascal says the first thing we have to give up or lay in the stake, for eternal life, is our human reason. . . . Suppose we give up all reasoning about the matter and resolutely determine to believe with all our hearts, I fancy that this choice and determination once made, convincing proofs will soon be vouchsafed. But you and I have begun at the wrong end, and have impertinently asked for the proofs first—is not this so, my dearest father—and do not you think it is high time for us both to try the other way? If

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one were to calculate averageable life at eighty years, with a doubtful evening after that time, and suppose this represented by a day of sixteen hours from six morning till ten night, I am now at *noon*, you at *six* in the evening—with both of us the day is far spent—I never think my day worth much after twelve o'clock. And yet I fear—forgive me if I am wrong—that neither of us have either chosen our master or begun our work."

(*To his Father.*) "ROUEN, *October* 15.—The church service of this afternoon in the cathedral was, I suppose, the last at which we shall be present this journey in a Romanist church; and it has perhaps contributed more to my former ideas of the propriety of splendour of music and architecture in religious service than any at which I have been present of the kind; the congregation full and attentive; the archbishop coming down with his attendants, as usual, to his seat opposite the pulpit, and thence blessing the people; the sermon relating the good that religious men and prelates had done to the city; its text, 'Blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God'; the singing afterwards most saintly and sublime. I felt convinced that freed from abuses, this *mode* of service was the right one, and that if bishops were bishops indeed, and priests priests indeed,—if the doctrines of purgatory and bought absolution, of Mariolatry, and of the vicarianism of the Pope,—above all, if dishonesty and doing evil that good might come and of doctrine of salvation by works were cast out of the Church, and the Bible made free to the people,—that all these proud pillars and painted casements, all these burning lamps and smoking censers, all these united voices and solemn organ peals had their right and holy use in this their service, and that all these white-robed priests and young troops of novice and chorister could be, and ought to be devoted to their lofty duties and separated from the common world without offence—yes, and with high honour, before God."

(*To his Father.*) "CALAIS, *October* 24, 1848. . . . So much fêting and fairing and drinking, singing, and swearing I never saw nor heard since I was first in France—but all set off and foiled by an under evidence of distress, degradation and danger, the most utter and immediate: I have been in Paris for two days: it had always a black, rent and patched, vicious and rotten look about its ghastly faubourgs: but to see—as now is seen—all this gloom without the

meanest effort at the forced gaiety which once disguised it—deepened by all the open evidences of increasing—universal—and hopeless suffering: and scarred by the unhappy traces of a slaughterous and dishonourable contest—is about as deep and painful a lesson—for those who will receive it—as ever was read by vice in ruin. But the melancholy thing is the piteous complaining of the honest inhabitants—all suffering as much as the most worthless, and not knowing what to do—or where to look. I think the only cheerful face that I saw in Paris was that of Marrast, the President of the Assembly (whom we saw at the theatre)—a countenance hardly fine, but prepossessing, thoughtful, and hopeful. I saw no other face that did not bear the signs either of melancholy—anxiety—or outwearied dissipation—more or less concealed under a dark indifference. . . . Vagabonds and ruffians—undisguised—fill the streets, only waiting—not for *an* opportunity but for *the best* opportunity of attack. And yet even from the faces of these I have seen the malice and brutality vanish if a few words of ordinary humanity were spoken to them. . . ."

Ruskin himself, when occasion offered, reasoned with the people of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come:—

(*To his Father.*) "ROUEN, *Oct.* 2.—Certainly I saw nothing good at Caen. I went to a café to get my sketching regularly. The first day I went there, about eleven o'clock, in the upper room (sanded all over to conceal spitting) there followed me upstairs a party of five young men, decently enough dressed, who sat down to drink beer, smoke, and play at cards. We all continued our occupations for about an hour and a half, when one of them having risen and come to the window to see what I was about, I put aside my drawing (after allowing him to see it) and began conversation by saying what a happy country France was or must be—in comparison to England—where the young men could afford the time and the money to spend in cafés from eleven to one, who with us would be compelled to work for their bread. He blushed considerably, and said it always happened more on Saturday which was a kind of holiday. 'Then,' I said, 'on Sunday—to-morrow—of course you go to church.' 'Jamais,' he answered, but not in a spirit of bravado: on the contrary, looking fidgetty and uncomfortable. 'Never at all?' I said. 'Jamais.' 'Then, I suppose you do not believe in God.' 'Oh yes,

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certainly.' 'Well, but then do not the priests tell you that you should go to church?" 'Oh yes, but enfin, ce n'est pas la coutume içi.' 'Well,' I said, looking all the while very innocent, and as if I asked for information—'then, of course you say your prayers in the morning and when you go to bed?' He looked round at this to his companions who were still drinking their beer, but had left off their game at cards to listen. The question was received with a laugh indeed, but not an insolent one (as I expected); they seemed very much astonished and a good deal ashamed and partly puzzled to know what I was at, and partly amused at the evident discomfort of the person immediately addressed, who replied hesitatingly, 'Non, non, nous ne prions jamais, c'est a dire—enfin—on fait la prière quand on est triste.'"

Ruskin carried his missionary enterprise further, and meeting the same young man again a day or two after, "ventured to suggest to him that he would find the Bible a very interesting book, and reading it quite as entertaining as card-playing in the morning."

II

On his return from France, Ruskin established himself in a house of his own, No. 31 Park Street, Grosvenor Square, and there during the winter wrote *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. During the same time he wrote for the *Art Journal* an account of Samuel Prout—the artist whose drawings had first familiarised him with French architecture, and whose work must have occurred to him at every turn in Rouen and Lisieux. The paper on Prout is among the most charming of Ruskin's earlier pieces, and, as the biographical details were derived from the artist himself, it is the standard authority on its subject. The essay appeared anonymously in the *Art Journal*, but it was signed all over by the author of *Modern Painters*. It shows once more how full was Ruskin's mind at this period of the destruction of ancient buildings, and of the value, therefore, of all pictorial records of them. A time will

come, he said, when Prout's works "will be cherished with a melancholy gratitude, when the pillars of Venice shall lie mouldering in the salt shallows of her sea, and the stones of the goodly towers of Rouen have become ballast for the barges of the Seine."

A pen-picture of Ruskin at this time of eager activity has been drawn by Dr. Furnivall, who was invited to call at Park Street one Sunday afternoon:—

"After a short chat with the wife, I saw the door open, and John Ruskin walkt softly in. I sprang up at once to take the outstretcht hand, and then and there began a friendship which was for many years the chief joy of my life. Ruskin was a tall, slight fellow, whose piercing frank blue eye lookt through you, and drew you to him. A fair man, with rough light hair and reddish whiskers, in a dark blue frock coat with velvet collar, bright Oxford blue stock, black trousers and patent slippers—how vivid he is to me still! The only blemish in his face was the lower lip, which protruded somewhat: he had been bitten there by a dog in his early youth. But you ceast to notice this as soon as he began to talk. I never met any man whose charm of manner at all approacht Ruskin's. Partly feminine it was, no doubt; but the delicacy, the sympathy, the gentleness and affectionateness of his way, the fresh and penetrating things he said, the boyish fun, the earnestness, the interest he showd in all deep matters, combined to make a whole which I have never seen equalld."[1]

Ruskin's absorption in his work did not entirely prevent social engagements:—

(*To his Father.*) "*Jan.* 31, 1849.—I little thought when I saw you into the carriage at ten o'clock yesterday morning, that at the same hour that evening I should be performing the same agreeable duty to Madlle. Jenny Lind. But so it was, for a note came for me as soon as I got home, from Mr. George, asking me to dine with her and his sister and him, in a quiet way, at half-past six. I found, when I went, only Mr. George and his sister, two lady friends staying

[1] "Forewords" to *Two Letters concerning Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*, privately printed, 1890.

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in the house, Dr. Skiey, and Jenny Lind. I was much surprised at first, the fact being that she is very remarkably plain, and she was fatigued by the concert the night before; her manner most sweet and ladylike. Conversation at dinner turned chiefly on Alps and Alpine and Swedish scenery: speaking of the French, she said they seemed to be a nation shut out from the common portion of God's blessing upon men, and deservedly so. I interceded for them, and said that the peasantry were not altogether spoiled, that they only wanted an honest government and true religion. 'You have said All in that last word,' she replied.

"After coffee she sat down at the piano and sang several little—what Cattermole would call 'far away bits' of Swedish song. I said that I had heard she herself chiefly liked Mendelssohn? '*If* I like him,' she said, with singular intensity—evidently translating the French of her thought—'*Si* je l'aime!' then pausing for an instant—'Did you know him?' 'No.' 'Better for you you did not.' 'How so?' 'The loss—too great,' she said, her voice evidently faltering a little. I had no idea she was personally so attached to him, or I should not have spoken of him. I said it was better to have known and to remember. She remained quiet for half a minute, and then sang Bellini's 'Qui la voce' very gloriously, prolonging the low notes exactly like soft wind among trees—the higher ones were a little too powerful for the room, but the lowest were heard dying away as if in extreme distance for at least half a minute, and then melted into silence. It was in sound exactly what the last rose of Alpine sunset is in colour. She then rose, and soon after left us—to my great disappointment, for I was in hopes of getting a little quiet talk with her, and perhaps of getting her to see the Turners at Denmark Hill. However, when I began speaking to my mother about it this morning she was horrified, so it is just as well I did not. She seems to look upon her just as an ordinary actress.

"Mr. George has been unwell with influenza and was afraid to go to the door with her, so I saw her shawled and took her to her carriage. Meantime Effie had gone to Mrs. Milman's, where, after Jenny Lind's departure, I followed her, and found Dr. and Miss Buckland and Frank Buckland, Mr. and Mrs. Liddell, Lady Lyell and her sister, Lord Lansdowne, Lady Mary Wood, Professor Taylor, and a good many more. I had a long talk with Lord Lansdowne about

Normandy, and Effie about something else. I will get her to send you a line herself, for she knows much more about the whole of it than I, but I will try and remember something for to-morrow." CHAP. XI.

III

Ruskin can have had little time, however, for such distractions. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was all written between November 1848 and April 1849. It was the first of his books to be illustrated, and in the original edition the plates were not only drawn by the author but were also etched by his own hand. These plates will always give a certain interest to the first edition. They are rough but vigorous, and exhibit, as Ruskin afterwards claimed for them, "the architecture itself with its actual shadow at the time of day at which it was drawn and with every fissure and line of it" as they existed at the time. "No architectural draughtsman whom I can name," says Hamerton in his *Etching and Etchers*, "with the one glorious exception of Méryon, has ever drawn buildings in a way comparable to Ruskin." The illustrations were in soft-ground etching, a process of which he picked up the technique as he went along; and one at least of the plates was executed under decidedly disadvantageous conditions. He had gone abroad before the work was finished, and the last plate was bitten in his wash-hand basin at the Hôtel de la Cloche at Dijon. The book was thus produced at high pressure. Time pressed, for the buildings described were in danger of destruction. Conviction pressed, for Ruskin had long meditated on the principles which he was eager to expound. Other work pressed, for *The Seven Lamps* was an interlude delaying the continuation of *Modern Painters*. The manuscript of *The Seven Lamps* shows that the book was written with all the author's habitual care,[1] but it was written with something more than his usual speed and concentration. It has a unity of subject-matter and an orderliness of treatment which do not belong to *Modern Painters*;

[1] See on this point, below, chap. xviii.

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though, indeed, he confesses that he found great difficulty in keeping his Seven Lamps "from becoming Eight—or Nine—or even quite a vulgar row of foot-lights."[1] The book has, too, even more than the author's habitual vitality. No inconsiderable part of the essential character of beauty, he says in "The Lamp of Life," depends on the expression of vital energy. The Lamp is itself seen lighted, as a fine critic has observed, in "this beautiful and impassioned work of literature. One thing Ruskin never lacks, never flags in, and that is an invincible vitality. Compared with his great vitality, the vivacity of other authors is little more than an insignificant or ineffectual agitation."[2]

A book that thus came from the heart and was lighted with so much life did not fail of making an immediate effect, and it has been among the most widely read of all the author's works. The task of seeing the last revises through the press had been entrusted as usual to W. H. Harrison, and Ruskin was resting in Switzerland when it appeared. During a portion of the tour Ruskin went for an expedition to Courmayeur by himself, while his parents stayed at Geneva. The following are extracts from letters written to him by his father—sometimes ingenuous in their enthusiasm, sometimes not without their paternal barb:—

(Geneva, *July* 29.)—"Miss Tweddale says your book *has made a great sensation.*" (31st): "Thiers has surprised and delighted the Chamber of Deputies by your doctrine of no such thing as Liberty. I think he has borrowed" . . . (August 4): "The *Spectator*, which Smith sets great value on, has an elaborate favourable notice on 'Seven Lamps,' only ascribing an *infirmity* of temper, quoting railroad passage in proof. Anne was told by American family servant that you were in American paper, and got it for us, the *New York Tribune* of July 13; first article is your book. They say they are willing to be learners from, rather than critics of, such a book, etc. The *Daily News* (some of the *Punch* people's paper) has a capital notice. It begins: 'This

[1] *Seven Lamps*, ch. iv. (note of 1880), and *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 5.

[2] Mrs. Meynell's Introduction to Messrs. Routledge's edition, 1910.

is a masked battery of seven pieces, which blaze away to the total extinction of the small architectural lights we may boast of, etc., etc.'" (August 5): "I have, at a shameful charge of ten francs, got August magazine and Dickens, quite a prohibition for parcels from England. In *British Quarterly*, under Æsthetics of Gothic architecture, they take four works, you first . . . As a critic they almost rank you with Goethe and Coleridge, and in style with Jeremy Taylor."

Reference to the periodicals of the time shows that Miss Tweddale did not exaggerate in saying that *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* "made a great sensation" in literary circles. Reviews in the daily and weekly press were prompt and numerous, and for the most part long and complimentary. The monthly and quarterly magazines were equally appreciative of the book. Almost without exception they noticed it, and added to favourable criticisms long extracts or a careful analysis of the author's argument. In the United States, as well as in the United Kingdom, the book made an immediate mark. On the whole the contemporary reviews of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* are creditable to the critical fairness and insight of the day; they anticipated what seems likely to be the verdict of posterity. The book, predicted one of the critics, will establish for itself "a place among the standard works of English Literature."[1] Nor was it only with the critics of the press that Ruskin's volume made a hit. The title-page ("by John Ruskin, Author of *Modern Painters*") contained the first public avowal of his identity with the "Graduate"; and a year or two later he and his wife were invited to the Master's Lodge at Trinity College, Cambridge, where his architectural studies secured him interesting talks with the great archæological authorities of the day—Whewell himself and Professor Willis. Letters to his father show with what consideration he was treated:—

"Trinity Lodge, *Sunday evening* [*April* 6, 1851].—I could not write to you last night. We got here at twenty minutes past five, and there was a large dinner-party at ¼ past six. It is a

[1] *Dublin University Magazine*, July 1849.

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beautiful house,—far superior to our Dean's at Christ Church, back rooms with oriel windows deep embayed, plenty of light, and fine dark furniture, carved wood, etc., all very beautiful. . . . Large dinner: heads of colleges, etc., and Professor Willis, with whom I foregathered, of course, and enjoyed myself.

"*Monday* [*April* 7, 1851]. . . . Dr. and Mrs. Whewell are most kind, and delightfully easy to live with—he is marvellously different from our formalist Oxford heads. Everybody fêtes us here exceedingly, and I have had some nice chats with Professor Willis; but I am quite resting—taking no notes and getting as much relaxation as possible. . . . To-morrow we go to Ely, with Dr. Whewell and Professor Willis."

The phrase quoted above from one of the reviews—it "sounds like a hymn to architectural loveliness"—well expresses one quality of *The Seven Lamps*. Ruskin in later years found fault with the fine writing of the book.[1] There are passages which are perhaps overcharged with ornament; but how many there are also which have imparted to the mind of every reader a fresh interest in mediæval architecture, and invested it with an element of deeper sentiment! There is probably nobody who does not find something to disagree with in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. But many of those who differ from the author most often would find, upon taking a careful inventory of their mental furniture, that they would be much the poorer, in their thoughts and feelings about architecture, if he had never published this book. "No man of feeling," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, of the peroration to "The Lamp of Sacrifice," "who has in him the echoes of this funeral sermon, can stand before a great mediæval cathedral without being conscious that it has gained for him a new meaning, a sublimer pathos."[2]

Architects as a rule have not been among the greatest admirers of the book; they often misunderstand its scope; many of the author's *obiter dicta* are fanciful or doubtful; he did nothing to conciliate professional opinion, and the ideals he set before the profession were exacting. But, as with painters, so with architects: Ruskin's "hymn" has

[1] See "Advice" of 1880.

[2] *John Ruskin*, in the "English Men of Letters" Series, p. 60.

exercised a potent influence in asserting the dignity, and enhancing the reputation, of their art. The profession in its corporate capacity showed its appreciation of his services by proposing to confer a Gold Medal upon him in 1874, and by passing a vote of condolence with his relatives on the occasion of his death.[1]

The influence and the importance of *The Seven Lamps* are, however, something else besides those of "a hymn to architectural loveliness." Its central idea and many of its leading principles made an epoch in the study of architecture, and exercised considerable influence upon its practice and development. That critic of an earlier book by Ruskin who had told him to eschew eloquence was perhaps not altogether ill-advised. The luxuriant rhetoric of the perorations in *The Seven Lamps*, the very richness of the images and illustrations,[2] have led some readers, as Ruskin himself often complained, to separate the style from the sense, and to ignore the structure in the decoration. It was the first treatise in English to teach the significance of architecture

[1] Mr. J. M. Brydon, Vice-President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, in proposing the vote, said that "Mr. Ruskin had been a power in the country for over half a century. In their own particular art probably no man in this age had influenced architects as he had. He was responsible to a great extent for that wave of Venetian Gothic which passed over the country, notable examples of which were to be found in Oxford and in London. He was the man who probably first awakened the English people to a knowledge of what art really meant: art in the life of its people, art in the true sense of the word, as an ennobling faculty which raised men, and induced in them a longing for higher and nobler things. Probably in that connection no work had had more influence and deserved higher commendation, not only to students of architecture, but to all who were striving for culture, than that magnificent book, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and particularly those chapters which dealt with Truth and with Sacrifice" (*Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, vol. vii. (3rd Series), p. 116).

[2] How fine, for instance, are the phrases in which he teaches the architect to "think in shadow": "Let him design with the sense of cold and heat upon him; let him cut out the shadows, as men dig wells in unwatered plains" . . . let him see that the light "is broad and bold enough not to be swallowed up by twilight," and the shadow "deep enough not to be dried like a shallow pool by the noon-day sun."

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as national autobiography. Ruskin had seized this truth securely, long before he wrote the volume. It is stated—incidentally, though clearly—in his first essay, that on *The Poetry of Architecture;* but in *The Seven Lamps* it is worked out more fully. This fundamental doctrine, adds Professor Norton, "is sound, and needs to be enforced to-day no less than forty years ago. It is, that in architecture, as well as in the other fine arts, the final test of the excellence of a work is the spirit of which it is the expression, and of which it gives evidence alike in its design and in its execution,—evidence all the more convincing because of its unintentional and inevitable character."[1] In the treatment of the several "Lamps," Ruskin's book is equally suggestive. The history of architecture was enlightened by his analysis of the fifty years which witnessed the perfection of French Gothic—of that short "period of pause" during which the architect gave equal attention to the form of the tracery and the pattern of the light it enclosed, and used not the line, but the mass, as the element of his decoration. And in connexion with the relation of style to sense in Ruskin's own art, it may be noted, in the famous passage at the end of "The Lamp of Truth," with what beautiful precision the diction fits the thought:—

"At the close of the period of pause, the first sign of change was like a low breeze, passing through the emaciated tracery, and making it tremble. It began to undulate like the threads of a cobweb lifted by the wind. It lost its essence as a structure of stone. Reduced to the slenderness of threads, it began to be considered as possessing also their flexibility. The architect was pleased with this his new fancy, and set himself to carry it out; and in a little time, the bars of tracery were caused to appear to the eye as if they had been woven together like a net. This was a change which sacrificed a great principle of truth; it sacrificed the expression of the qualities of the material; and, however delightful its results in their first developments, it was ultimately ruinous. . . . It was not the robber, not the fanatic, not the blasphemer, who sealed the destruction that they had wrought; the war, the wrath, the terror, might have

[1] Preface to the American "Brantwood Edition," 1891, pp. ix. x.

worked their worst, and the strong walls would have risen, and the slight pillars would have started again, from under the hand of the destroyer. But they could not rise out of the ruins of their own violated truth."

And, more generally, *The Seven Lamps* applied to architecture the same touchstone of truth and sincerity that Ruskin had already employed in *Modern Painters*. "It shook conventional ideas," says Mr. Harrison, "to the root, and flung forth a body of new and pregnant ideas." The book contains much that is disputable; but "the truths were cemented into the foundations, and have stood solid and unshaken for two generations. The law of Truth in Art stands beside Carlyle's protest against 'shams'! That a building should look what it is, and be what it is built to serve—no one now dares dispute. That beauty itself comes second to truth, and must be sought in the architecture of Nature herself; . . . all this is now the alphabet of sound art."[1] And *The Seven Lamps* was among the most potent of schoolmasters in teaching the letters.[2]

The main significance of the book, and its general influence thus exerted, are independent of particular fashions in architecture, and are not affected by the dogmatisms, paradoxes, assumptions, and preferences of the author on particular points. As for the sectarian bitterness which flaunts itself here and there in the book, this has had no severer critic than Ruskin himself. It was a principal reason why he allowed the volume to remain for many years (1855–80) out of print; and when he did reprint it, it was with copious footnotes of self-criticism and with omission of some of the more violent pieces of Protestant intolerance. It is worth noting that the circumstances of the time at

[1] *John Ruskin*, 1902, pp. 57–59.

[2] According to one of Ruskin's French critics, his architectural books are the most important: "C'est en étudiant l'architecture, qu'il a écrit le plus de livres, trouvé les pages les plus éloquentes, formulé less idées les plus justes. Les volumes qu'il lui a consacrés forment la partie la plus durable de son œuvre par la minutie des recherches, la profondeur des connaissances techniques" (*Le Mouvement idéaliste et social dans la Littérature anglaise au XIX^e siècle. John Ruskin.* By Jacques Bardoux (Paris: 1900), pp. 300–301).

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which the book was written may have afforded a reason, though not a justification, for his sectarian emphasis. The architectural revival of the time was associated in the person of some of its leaders with High Ritualism, and Ruskin may on this account have deemed it desirable to emphasise strongly his Protestant standpoint. However this may be, the appearance of *The Seven Lamps* exercised considerable influence in strengthening the Gothic Revival then in progress.[1] To this matter, further reference will be found in a later chapter; as also to Ruskin's influence in the preservation of ancient buildings. It was in the chapter on "The Lamp of Memory" that he wrote the famous passage on "restoration":—

> "Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton, with what advantage I neither see nor care: but the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust, or melted into a mass of clay: more has been gleaned out of desolated Nineveh than ever will be out of re-built Milan."

In the story of Ruskin's life, as to the student of his work, *The Seven Lamps* is of further interest for the anticipation of social and political ideas which were afterwards to colour all his efforts. The book was written, as we have seen, in the stirring times of 1848; his studies of French architecture were made during the progress of the French revolution of that year. To earnest and thoughtful minds it must always be matter of desire to establish some harmony between studies in different spheres; to bring into relation conclusions arrived at in one field with things observed in another. This attempt is manifest in many passages of *The Seven Lamps*, and especially in the last chapter. "In these books of mine," said Ruskin at the end of *Modern Painters*, "their distinctive character, as

[1] For a discussion of the influence of *The Seven Lamps* and *The Stones of Venice* on "the battle of the styles," see an article by Professor Kerr in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, vol. vii. (3rd Series), p. 187.

essays on art, is their bringing everything to a root in human passion or human hope. . . . Every principle of painting which I have stated is traced to some vital or spiritual fact; and in my works on architecture the preference accorded finally to one school over another, is founded on a comparison of their influences on the life of the workman—a question by all other writers on the subject of architecture wholly forgotten or despised."[1] The point was to be made more fully in *The Stones of Venice*, of which (says Ruskin elsewhere) the object was to teach "the dependence of all human work or edifice, for its beauty, on the happy life of the workman."[2] But the doctrine is implied in much of the argument in *The Seven Lamps*, and is in places stated explicitly:—

"I believe the right question to ask, respecting all ornament, is simply this: Was it done with enjoyment—was the carver happy while he was about it? It may be the hardest work possible, and the harder because so much pleasure was taken in it; but it must have been happy too, or it will not be living. How much of the stone mason's toil this condition would exclude I hardly venture to consider, but the condition is absolute."

"We are, perhaps, hardly enough in the habit of inquiring, with respect to any particular form of luxury or any customary appliance of life, whether the kind of employment it gives to the operative or the dependent be as healthy and fitting an employment as we might otherwise provide for him. It is not enough to find men absolute subsistence; we should think of the manner of life which our demands necessitate; and endeavour, as far as may be, to make all our needs such as may, in the supply of them, raise, as well as feed, the poor. It is far better to give work which is above the men, than to educate the men above their work."

Ruskin's mind was already at work along the lines on which he afterwards based his teaching at Oxford; he was connecting architecture with social reconstruction: "so, from day to day, and strength to strength, you shall build

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. i. § 7.

[2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 78.

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up indeed, by Art, by Thought, and by Just Will, an Ecclesia of England, of which it shall not be said, 'See what manner of stones are here,' but 'See what manner of men.'"[1] The implications in such passages were not lost upon some of Ruskin's reviewers when *The Seven Lamps* appeared, and his old enemy *Blackwood's Magazine* was puzzled and sarcastic at his "breaking loose" in "so strange a manner." It was not the first time that an apostle of a new dispensation had been met with the question, What will this babbler say?

[1] *Lectures on Art*, § 125.

CHAPTER XII

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

(1849)

> "Great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow, and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars."—*Modern Painters.*

"I HAVE been as busy as an ant," wrote Ruskin from Chamouni in August 1849.[1] That is a description of his life, in one of its aspects; and if it be the case that an ant's mode of progression is not always from point to point, of Ruskin also it is true that he took his arduous divagations. He had finished *The Seven Lamps* and intended next to write on the architecture of Venice, but in the meanwhile he continued his studies for *Modern Painters.* He was exhausted after writing the former book, and the Alps were calling. His wife felt unequal to the fatigue of foreign travel; and it was decided that she should go to her parents in Scotland while he went with his to Switzerland. Cousin Mary was no longer of the party. She had married some time before, and died while Ruskin was abroad in this year.

I

It was among the mountains in 1849 that his principal studies for the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters* were made. His diaries and letters of the time are in almost every page a commentary on the book. The scenes which left the deepest impress were Vevay, Chamouni, the Rhone Valley, and Zermatt; nearly all the most beautiful

[1] See below, p. 253.

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and the most important passages in the volumes embody impressions received or observations recorded at one or other of those places. Ruskin and his parents went first to the Grande Chartreuse. In passing through the cells he noticed that the window of each apartment looked across the little garden of its inhabitant to the wall of the cell opposite, and commanded no other view. To Ruskin the mountains were cathedrals of the earth, and he asked the monk beside him why the window was not made rather on the side of the cell whence it would open to the solemn fields of the Alpine valley. Whereupon, with a curl of his lip, "We do not come here," said the monk, "to look at the mountains." The answer is recorded several times in Ruskin's books, and in *Præterita* he adds his own silent retort, "What, then, by all that's stupid, do you come here for at all?" A letter written at the time shows that the retort was given in other words:—

(*To* George Richmond.) "Vevay, *May* 20. . . . By-the-bye, I have been to the Grande Chartreuse too—got wet going up, and couldn't finish an argument I got into with one of the monks, on the impropriety of his staying up there and doing nothing. He compared himself to Moses discomfiting Amalek by holding up his hands. I begged him to observe that Moses only came to that when he was too old to do anything else. I think I should have got the better of him, if it hadn't been for the weather."

At Chambéry Ruskin made pilgrimage to Les Charmettes, unchanged at this time. Lord Morley in his study of Rousseau has contrasted the peace and beauty of the spot with "the diseased miserable life of the famous man who found a scanty span of paradise in it." Ruskin notes "a chat with an old man, a proprietor of some land on the hillside, who complained bitterly that the priests and the revenue officers seized everything, and that nothing but black bread was left for the peasants." This is one of several entries in his diary of the time pointing to the awakening of those instincts of political revolt in Ruskin's mind which were to make him claim affinity with Rousseau. From Chambéry Ruskin went on a short

excursion to Chamouni with his old school-friend, Richard Fall. He then rejoined his parents at Geneva, and they went on to Vevay. CHAP. XII.

II

It was at Vevay, among the narcissus meadows, then scarce touched by villas and railways, that Ruskin stored up the impressions which he cast into his prose-poem on the grass of the field. Everybody knows the passage;[1] it is the one which Matthew Arnold cited as an example of Ruskin's genius in its best and most original exercise. The first thought of the passage occurs in his diary of 1849:—

"VEVAY, *Sunday, June* 3. . . . Such grass, for strength, and height, and loveliness, I never saw—all blue too with masses of salvia and flamed with gold, yet quiet and solemn in its own green depth; the air was full of the scent of the living grass and new-mown hay, the sweet breathing of the honeysuckle and narcissus shed upon it at intervals, mixed with the sound of streams, and the clear thrill of birds' voices far away. . . . I looked at the slope of distant grass on the hill; and then at the waving heads near me. What a gift of God that is, I thought. Who could have dreamed of such a soft, green, continual, tender clothing for the dark earth—the food of cattle, and of man. Think what poetry has come of its pastoral influence, what happiness from its everyday ministering, what life from its sustenance. Bread that strengtheneth man's heart—ah, well may the Psalmist number among God's excellencies, 'He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.'"

It was on the same walk that another thought came to him, which finds expression in the third volume of *Modern Painters* on the weariableness of the imagination:[2]—

"VEVAY, *Sunday, June* 3.—I walked up this afternoon to Blonay, very happy, and yet full of some sad thoughts; how perhaps I should not be again among those lovely scenes, as I was now and had ever been, a youth with his parents—it seemed that the sunset

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xiv. § 51.

[2] Chap. x. § 14.

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of to-day sunk upon me like the departure of youth. First I had a hot march among the vines, and between their dead stone walls; once or twice I flagged a little, and began to think it tiresome; then I put my *mind* into the scene, instead of suffering the body only to make report of it; and looked at it with the possession-taking grasp of the imagination—the true one; it gilded all the dead walls, and I felt a charm in every vine tendril that hung over them. It required an effort to maintain the feeling: it was poetry while it lasted, and I felt that it was only while under it that one could draw, or invent, or give glory to, any part of such a landscape. I repeated 'I am in *Switzerland*' over and over again, till the name brought back the true group of associations, and I felt I had a soul, like my boy's soul, once again. I have not insisted enough on this source of all great contemplative art. The whole scene without it was but sticks and stones and steep dusty road."

From Vevay Ruskin and his parents went by Geneva to Chamouni. Few modern travellers know much of the long valley of approach, of which every cliff and field were dear to Ruskin. It is not so much a valley, he says, as a winding plain between great mountains:—

"Slopes of pasture and forest, mingled with arable land, in a way which you can only at present see in Savoy; that is to say, you have walnut and fruit trees of great age, mixed with oak, beech, and pine, as they all choose to grow—it seems as if the fruit trees planted themselves as freely as the pines. . . . No fences anywhere; winding field walks, or rock paths, from cottage to cottage; these last not of the luxurious or trim Bernese type, nor yet comfortless chalets; but sufficient for orderly and virtuous life: in outer aspect, beautiful exceedingly, just because their steep roofs, white walls, and wandering vines had no pretence to perfectness, but were wild as their hills. All this pastoral country lapped into inlets among the cliffs, vast belts of larch and pine cresting or crowding the higher ranges, whose green meadows change as they rise, into mossy slopes, and fade away at last among the grey ridges of rock that are soonest silvered with autumnal snow. The ten-miles' length of this valley, between Cluses and St. Martin's, include more scenes of pastoral beauty and mountain power than all the poets of the world have

imagined; and present more decisive and trenchant questions respecting mountain structure than all the philosophers of the world could answer." [1]

In this approach to Chamouni, Ruskin loved to linger. In these later tours with his parents, he had his separate carriage, so that he might stop behind, to draw or to collect specimens, and catch them up as he chose. Leaving the carriage at Cluses, he always walked to St. Martin; pausing, it may be, by the bridge and cottage, where the cascade descends near the village of Magland—the scene of a drawing by Turner; or studying the flowers beneath the vast towers and promontories of the Aiguille de Varens. The village of St. Martin, opposite Sallenches, was a favourite resting-place, and "The Hotel of Mont Blanc" there was, he says, "of all my inn homes, the most eventful, pathetic, and sacred." "Eventful," in the sense of being the home of fruitful thoughts, the scene of happy hours:—

"A two-storied building of solid grey stone, with gabled roof and garrets; a central passage on the second floor giving access to the three or four bedrooms looking to back and front, and at the end to an open gallery over the road. The last room on the left, larger than the rest, and with a window opening on the gallery, used to be my father's and mother's; that next it, with one square window in the solid wall, looking into the yard, mine. . . . The real and prevalent prospect was first into the leaves of the walnut tree in the corner; then of the mossy stable roofs behind them; then of the delicately tin-mailed and glittering spire of the village church; and beyond these, the creamy, curdling, overflowing seas of snow on the Mont Blanc de St. Gervais. The Aiguille de Bionnassay, the most graceful buttress ridge in all the Alps, and Mont Blanc himself, above the full fronts of the Aiguille and Dôme du Goûter, followed further to the left. So much came into the field of that little four-feet-square casement. . . ." [2]

A month at Chamouni followed, and this, for *Modern Painters*, was among the most fruitful times in Ruskin's

[1] *Deucalion*, vol. i. chap. v.

[2] *Præterita*, vol. ii. §§ 216, 217.

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life. With the faithful Couttet for his guide, he rambled during long days among the glaciers, or sauntered in the valley, examining, observing, sketching. And at evening time we may see him leaning, as he says in his diary (July 8), "on the blocks of lichened wall beside the road, exchanging good-nights with the passers-by, and listening as their voices left me to the filling of the valley by the sound of the waves of the Arve, mixed with cattle bells and many strange and dim mountain sounds, mingled in confusion like the grey stones of the wall I leaned upon." Thus did "beauty born of murmuring sound" pass into his thoughts and words. But in company with the hours of restful thought came strenuous labours.

He worked upon the stones of Chamouni as diligently as upon the *Stones of Venice*. He noted the angles of the aiguilles, observed every fleeting effect of cloud, examined the rocks, collected the minerals, gathered the flowers. His observations were entered up in his diaries and note-books as carefully as were his architectural studies at Venice. His industry in drawing was as great. At a later time, when he was examining his materials for the composition of the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, he made a catalogue of his sketches at Chamouni. They numbered sixty-four; and of these, forty-seven belong to the year 1849. Extracts from his diary show how his days were spent:—

"Chamouni, *Sunday, June 17th.*—Quiet south rain till twelve o'clock. I have been abstracting the book of Revelation, (they say the French are beaten again at Rome, and another revolution in Paris); many signs seem to multiply around us, and yet my unbelief yields no more than when all the horizon was clear. I was especially struck with the general appellation of the system of the world as the 'Mystery of God,' Chap. x. 7, compared with Hebrews xi. 6, which I read this morning in our usual course. Theme enough for the day's thought."

"Chamouni, *day 15th, Wednesday, June 27th.*—One of the heavenly Alpine mornings, all alight: I have been trying to get some of the effect of sunrise on the Montanvert, and aerial quality

of aiguilles,—in vain. Slanting rays now touch the turf, by the chalet of Blaitière, as perhaps they touch poor Mary's grave."

"CHAMOUNI, 28*th day* (and for this year, last,—unless I return from Zermatt): *Evening, July* 10.—It has been a glorious one; I was working from Mont Blanc before breakfast, out immediately afterwards; made some notes of Aiguille Bouchard, went on to the Source beside the Arveron, somewhat closer than usual, it having changed its bed entirely within the last three days, and running four feet deep where I used to walk; took slopes of Dru, from just beside the Arveron bridge; then climbed the avalanche with Couttet to foot of rocks near Montanvert; could not get upon them; awkward chasm between the ice and them; and at the only place where we could get upon them, another at the other side which made it a risk to pass the ridge. Got on them at last, however, higher up, and took from them specimens 27, 28 . . . [notes on these, and on the geology of the rocks]. . . . I have never yet seen a more noble and burning sunset than was on the Charmoz and lower Verte to-night—a hot, almost sanguine, but solemn crimson. . . . I have much to thank God for, now and ever."

Laborare est orare. Ruskin's thankfulness found its expression in those careful and loving studies, in words and drawings, of the Chamouni aiguilles which fill so large a portion of the fourth volume of *Modern Painters.*

III

His first month at Chamouni was now over, and his parents returned from the Alps to Geneva. He, meanwhile, attended by Couttet and George, was permitted to have another month to pursue his mountain-studies. First, he made the familiar Tour of Mont Blanc, proceeding by St. Gervais and Contamines over the Col du Bonhomme to Chapiu, and thence over the Col de la Seigne to Courmayeur. There he rested for a day, being physicked for sore throat by the faithful Couttet, and consoling himself "with the view from my window, not a bad one, of an old Lombard Tower and the range of the Col du Géant." From Courmayeur he went over the Col Ferret to Martigny. The

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Val Ferret pleased and interested him more than his walk through the Allée Blanche and the Val de Véni. The following passages are from his diary (Courmayeur, July 28):—

"The most magnificent piece of ruin I have yet seen in the Alps is that opposite the embouchure of the lower glacier of the Val de Ferret, near Courmayeur; the pines are small indeed, but they are hurled hither and thither; twisted and mingled in all conditions of form and all phases of expiring life, with the chaos of massy rocks which the glacier has quashed down or the opposite mountain hurled. And yet, further on, at the head of the valley, there is another in its way as wonderful, less picturesque, but wilder still, the remains of the *éboulement* of the Glacier de Triolet, caused by a fall of an aiguille near the Petites Jorasses—the most phrenzied accumulation of moraines I have ever seen, not dropped one by one into a heap and pushed forward by the ice ploughshare, but evidently borne down by some mingled torrent of ice and rock and flood, with the swiftness of water, and the weight of stone, and thrown along the mountain sides like pebbles from a stormy sea, but the ruins of an Alp instead of the powder of a flint bed."

Ruskin had been unfortunate in coming down from the Col de la Seigne tired and ill, for there are few walks in the Alps more lovely than that through the pastures and pine woods of the lower valley, with the snows of the Mont Blanc sparkling through the branches: but many travellers will find it hard to dispute the superiority which he attributes to the Col Ferret over the Col de la Seigne. He had passed through the Val Ferret in the morning; in evening light the walk in the reverse direction offers some of the sublimest aspects in the Alps; there is none which illustrates more effectively Ruskin's comparison of mountains to cathedrals than the spectacle of the huge shoulder of the Aiguille de Péteret as seen from this point.

From Martigny Ruskin went up to Zermatt for some days, and there made the studies on the cliffs of the Matterhorn which occupy several pages in his fourth volume. It is curious, as a contrast with present times, to find that, though it was August, Ruskin had the inn pretty much to

himself. "No one has been here," he writes (August 6), "but a party of French and Germans going over the Cervin, and various German botanists and students." He writes his first impressions to his father; possibly we must read a little diplomacy between the lines, for Ruskin, it will be seen, wanted his leave of absence somewhat extended:— CHAP. XII.

"[ZERMATT, *August* 6.] . . . I have had glorious weather, and on Friday I had such a day as I have only once or twice had the like of among the Alps. I got up to a promontory projecting from the foot of the Matterhorn, and lay on the rocks and drew it at my ease. I was about three hours at work, as quietly as if in my study at Denmark Hill, though on a peak of barren crag above a glacier, and at least 9000 feet above sea; but the Matterhorn, after all, is not so fine a thing as the Aiguille Dru, nor as any of the aiguilles of Chamouni. . . . I should like, if it were possible, to spend a couple of days more on the Montanvert, and at the bases of the Chamouni aiguilles—sleeping at the Montanvert. My month from the time I left you at St. Martin's, 26th July, is only up this day three weeks; so that I hope it will do if I am with you at Geneva on Monday evening the 27th. . . ."

Ruskin obtained an extension of time, but not without some alarm on the part of his parents on account of his illness at Courmayeur, and some remonstrances on the score of a temporary interruption of communications. He made good use of his leave in continuing his work among the aiguilles, and three days at the inn on the Montanvert[1] especially pleased him. He had never yet seen anything, he says in his book (vol. iv. ch. xiv. § 6), to equal the view from that spot. The following are extracts from his diary:—

"*August* 22.—I think I never enjoyed any evening so much as this in my life, unless it were one at Champagnole in 1845.[2] I

[1] This was the old inn, built in 1840, at the expense of the Commune of Chamouni, replacing the previous cabin (known as the "Temple de la Nature"). The inn was replaced in 1879 by the present hotel. At Chamouni, Ruskin always stayed at the Union.

[2] Described in a letter, given above, p. 174.

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had no idea what this place was, until I sat at the window quietly to-day watching the sunset and the vast flow of the ice, welling down the gorge—a dark and billowy river—yet with the mountainous swell and lifted crests that the iron rocks have round it. I have been nearly all day drawing at the Aiguille Blaitière."

Another pursuit at Chamouni was of a different kind—a hunt for a ghost:—

(*To his Father.*) "*Sunday, Aug.* 26.—I went down to near Couttet's house, to see the place where the Black Lady had been seen. I sent for the children who had seen her, and was really delighted by their gentle and simple manner. I don't depend on their veracity, however, so much as on their simplicity; all I can say is that if there be any deception *now*, they are very much improved in their mode of getting it up since I was last here. I saw three little girls, Constance, Rosine, and Caroline, and one little boy, Amboise, who all spoke French; another little fellow, very fidgety all the time, could only speak through Judith's interpretation. The last witness, whom I examined separately from the rest, was little Elizabeth Balmat, the daughter of the Syndic. All these children had seen for some hours, during Saturday and Sunday last, the figure of a woman in a black dress, with something white across the bosom, a white band across the forehead, and a black round bonnet or cap. It leaned with its arms folded against the trunk of a pine within two hundred yards of Couttet's house, and was only visible at a certain distance; the children went with me to the place and showed me how far—'déjà ici commença de la voir,' Constance said, when about ten yards from the tree—a young pine beside the fence of the usual cattle path from the Arve bridge. I cross-examined them as to the appearance of the phantom, but could get no more details satisfactorily. They seemed to have observed it accurately, but there was no appearance of any understanding among them. They turned indeed once or twice to each other, but it had simply the look of the kind of reference which two people who have seen the same thing naturally make to each other when any doubt is raised respecting it. The answers were given with the most perfect quietness and simplicity, as also Elizabeth Balmat's: the latter child said, 'Ca m'a fait trembler beaucoup'; but the others said it had

not frightened them, except a little boy who saw it first with Constance, and who ran home in a great fright. Couttet went to the place with them on Sunday last, while the phantom was visible. The first thing he did was to cut the branches off the tree, thinking some accidental shadow might deceive the children; but this made no difference. Then he went and stood himself beside the tree trunk; the figure was then seen by the children beside him; he moved away, and it returned to its place. Monsieur L'Abbé was next sent for, but could make no impression on the Black Lady. I am just going to see what he will say about it.

"(*Evening.*) I have seen the Abbé, and been down again to the haunted tree, and repeated Couttet's experiments, the apparition being 'at home' with the same negative results. The younger priest was down there also, and exceedingly puzzled; the strongest point of the case is the thorough fright sustained by three of the children. It appears that one of them last Saturday night could hardly be kept in his bed, and was continually crying out that he saw the figure again: and to-day Judith Couttet brought a little boy from the next village and told him when at the place to look and tell her if he saw anything. The blood ran into his face, and she saw (she told me) that 'c'a lui fit une resolution.' She asked him, by way of trial, whether it was not a 'poupet' that some one had put there. 'Ce n'est pas un poupet—c'est grand,' the child answered. 'Ça est tout habillé en rouge?' asked Judith. 'Non—C'est habillée toute en noir.' 'Mais ça est jolie à voir, n'est ce pas?' 'Non, ça n'est pas joli du tout, du tout,—c'est bien laide.' The child then turned aside his head, put it against Judith's side, and would not look any more."

At last it was time to leave:—

(*To his Father.*) "CHAMOUNI, *Aug.* 28.—It was too cloudy to do for aiguilles to-day, but I have been as busy as an ant, and have done a great deal. But how fast time does go. I have taken my place in diligence for Thursday, and hope to be with you in good time. But I quite feel as if I were leaving home to go on a journey. I shall not be melancholy, however, for I have really had a good spell of it; and, this last week, I have tried to get enough of it to last me for some time to come; and I think I have. I had

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nearly a little too much yesterday. I don't know whether it was hot at Geneva, but I was on a high glacier where there was no wind, and the sun scorched me till I was forced to turn back, and to carry an umbrella besides whenever I had a hand free, to which I was not reduced even in Italy. I don't know anything more wonderful in the Alps than the feeling of this insufferable sunshine, with all the crevices in the snow about one filled with icicles. I am quite well, however. Dearest love to my mother. I don't intend to write again."

So, then, Ruskin left his "home" among the mountains, and, having rejoined his parents at Geneva, returned to home and wife at Herne Hill. He had accumulated rich materials for *Modern Painters;* but, a fortnight later, he started off on another quest, to obtain materials for *The Stones of Venice.*

CHAPTER XIII

VENETIAN WINTERS

(1849–1850, 1851–1852)

> "There can be no question of the mischievous tendency of the hurry of the present day, in the way people undertake their very *looking*. I gave three years' close and incessant labour to the examination of the chronology of the architecture of Venice; two long winters being wholly spent in the drawing of details on the spot."—*A Joy for Ever.*

THE same eager enthusiasm which prompted *The Seven Lamps* led to Ruskin's next book. *The Stones of Venice* was indeed already in his mind when he was writing the earlier essay, which he asked his readers to regard as only an introduction to a more elaborate treatise.[1] In *The Seven Lamps* he defined certain states of moral temper which were necessary, as he maintained, to the production of good architecture. In *The Stones of Venice* his central theme was to illustrate from the rise and fall of Venetian architecture the working of moral and spiritual forces. "He had," he says, "from beginning to end, no other aim than to show that the Gothic architecture of Venice had arisen out of, and indicated in all its features, a state of pure national faith, and of domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance architecture had arisen out of, and in all its features indicated, a state of concealed national infidelity, and of domestic corruption."[2] The later book may thus be said to be a particular illustration of general principles laid down in the earlier one. He devoted his more elaborate essay to Venice, not because he desired to put forward Venetian Gothic as "the most noble of the schools of Gothic," but because the architecture of Venice "exemplifies,

[1] See the preface to the second edition of *Seven Lamps.*

[2] *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 65.

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in the smallest compass, the most interesting facts of architectural history." The leading ideas in the author's mind were, then, the same in both books. The same also was the impulse which led to the production of the one close upon the other. Just as he had hurried himself into *The Seven Lamps*, under pressure of the destructive forces of neglect and "restoration," so now it was his feeling that the charm of Venice was evanescent, his sight of the daily mouldering and rending of its walls, that drove him to postpone the completion of *Modern Painters* once more, until he had deciphered and imparted the lessons of the Stones of Venice. The title—as was often the case with Ruskin—had a double meaning. He hoped to make those Stones touchstones—tests of the good and the bad in all architecture; crucial examples, too, of the connection between national feeling and national architecture. But also it was from a city fast falling into ruin that his teaching was to be drawn: "Thy servants think upon their stones, and it pitieth them to see her in the dust." The prophet had no time to lose in uttering his message, for the waves were gaining fast against the STONES OF VENICE.

I

There was destined, however—as not unusually with Ruskin's eager undertakings—to be some delay. *The Seven Lamps* was published in May 1849; *The Stones of Venice* was not completed till October, 1853. The principal cause of the delay was the unexpected difficulty and complexity of the task, to which may be added the conscientious minuteness of the author's studies. He returned from his holiday among the mountains on September 16 and found his wife, now much better in health, awaiting him at Denmark Hill. Early in October he set out with her, bound for Venice. He showed her Chamouni on the way, and they went slowly through North Italy, arriving in November in Venice, where they established themselves at the Hotel Danieli for the winter. This sojourn lasted from November to March, and

like another sojourn two years later (Sept. 1, 1851–June 29, 1852), was for Ruskin a period of unremitting toil. The labour was fourfold; he read, he observed, he noted and measured, and he drew. He had already gone through a "steady course of historical reading"—in Sismondi, Alison, Daru, among other authors—in preparation for *The Stones of Venice*. At Venice itself he delved into the archives and into the works of sundry local writers on the art and topography of the city. Such reading may have given him a ground plan, and furnished him with hypotheses *pour servir;* but the conflict of authorities on the chronology of the Ducal Palace, and the absence of trustworthy data or established conclusions in the case of other buildings, speedily threw him back on his own researches; he must take nothing, he perceived, for granted or at second-hand. During this winter of 1849–50, therefore, and similarly two years later, he devoted himself to close study of all the remaining edifices of the city. The book itself bears emphatic evidence to the minuteness of his study; but the results that he garnered for publication, the conclusions at which he ultimately arrived, convey but a faint idea of his preparatory studies.

The greater part of each day, so long as light availed, seems to have been spent out of doors, in measuring and examining the buildings, or in making drawings. He carried with him little square note-books, of a size easily pocketable, in which he entered measurements, contours of mouldings, and the like, occasionally with slight notes of colour. Some of these books, evidently those in which he made his first notes for *The Stones of Venice*, are preserved at Brantwood. In the evening Ruskin entered up his memoranda and impressions in larger note-books. In them, all important measurements were recorded; distinctive or remarkable features of each building examined during the day were fully noted; and suggestions or impressions were written out. He avoided foregone conclusions. He often noted such and such an observation as provisional, requiring further examination or subsequent comparison with other buildings. As the work progressed, cross-references were supplied, and at the end, each volume of the Venetian diary

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was fully indexed. Ruskin, when he came to write the ultimate treatise, spoke by the book.[1]

These written materials represent, however, but half of his preliminary toil. The preparation of the illustrations involved great labour; but the drawings which were engraved are only a few of those that were made. The woodcuts similarly represent only a small number of hundreds of careful diagrams, figures, and sketches of architectural details, which the author drew during the preparation of this book. Sheets with pen drawings on them or with sketches in pencil and wash attached to them, are no doubt fair copies of the author's first graphic memoranda, just as the diaries were of his written notes. Nearly two hundred of such sheets were found at his death at Brantwood. Many of them have been exhibited, and some have now passed into public galleries and museums.

One of his letters home gives a lively account of the difficulties which he experienced in his work:—

"Venice, *Sunday, 23rd December.*—A week or two ago I commissioned my valet-de-place to obtain permission for me to draw the windows of the Palazzo Bernardo; he went, as he said, to the Count Bernardo, and I had hope for once of being admitted into a palace by the permission of its rightful owner. I was so—and found myself in a well-furnished room, with, however, the unsuitable adjunct of some clothes drying outside. The window not being the one I wanted, I asked to go upstairs. Alas, the Count owned but a single flat in his family palace—and I have now to get permission from the lodger above. . . . Mr. Brown recommended me one man

[1] A passage in T. A. Trollope's Autobiography gives the evidence of one who followed in Ruskin's footsteps: "I spent several mornings in carefully hunting out all the specimens of Byzantine architecture which Ruskin registers as still existing in Venice, and can testify to the absolute exactitude of his topographical and architectural statements. I carefully examined also the examples which he cites as indications of subtle design on the part of the old architects in cases where abnormality and carelessness might be suspected. His facts and measurements I found invariably correct, but am disposed to think that he lets his hobby somewhat run away with him in the imputation of far-fetched and subtle design" (*What I remember*, vol. iii. p. 217).

as the only one who knew *anything* of those connected with the library in the Ducal Palace. I asked him, among other matters, whether the windows, which have now no tracery in them, ever had any. Never, he said—there was not the slightest trace of it. These windows require ladders to get up to them and are difficult in the opening—so it struck me as quite possible that nobody might have taken the trouble to look. Yesterday I went for this special purpose—got the library steps and opened all the windows, one after another, round the palace. I found the bases of the shafts of the old tracery—the holes for the bolts which had fastened it—the marks of its exact diameter on the wall—and finally, in a window at the back, of which I believe not one of the people who have written on the place know so much as the existence, one of its spiral shafts left—capital and all. The librarian asked me afterwards 'whether I had found any marks'; I said, 'a few traces, certainly,' but told him nothing about my spiral shaft; he may go and look himself, if he likes. The historical records about the Palace are one mass of confusion. . . . Most of the accounts agree in proving that the top was built before the bottom. I got sick of this sort of thing, and set to work, to separate its sculpture into classes, and I have got internal evidence of six different periods of work upon it—and of more than one architect in several of the periods—these broad facts I shall give in order, and let them quarrel about who was who, as they like."

Ruskin's labours often reduced him, he says, into a very prosaic humour with Venice. The mood appears in a letter written at the time, and is recalled (with an obvious and characteristic strain of humorous exaggeration) in one of later date:—

(*To* Samuel Rogers.) "Venice, *June* 23, 1852.—What must you have thought of me, after your kind answer to my request to be permitted to write to you, when I never wrote? I was out of health and out of heart when I first got here. . . . The worst of it was that I lost all *feeling* of Venice, and this was the reason both of my not writing to you and of my thinking of you so often. For whenever I found myself getting utterly hard and indifferent, I used to read over a little bit of the 'Venice' in the *Italy*, and it put

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me always into the right tone of thought again, and for this I cannot be enough grateful to you. For though I believe that in the summer, when Venice is indeed lovely, when pomegranate blossoms hang over every garden wall, and green sunlight shoots through every wave, custom will not destroy, or even weaken, the impression conveyed at first; it is far otherwise in the length and bitterness of the Venetian winters. Fighting with frosty winds at every turn of the canals takes away all the old feelings of peace and stillness; the protracted cold makes the dash of the water on the walls a sound of simple discomfort, and some wild and dark day in February one starts to find oneself actually balancing in one's mind the relative advantages of land and water carriage, comparing the Canal with Piccadilly, and even hesitating whether for the rest of one's life one would rather have a gondola within call or a hansom. When I used to get into this humour I *always* had recourse to those lines of yours:—

> 'The Sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
> Ebbing and flowing, etc.;'

and they did me good service for many a day; but at last a time came when the sea was *not* in the narrow streets, and was always ebbing and not flowing; and one day, when I found just a foot and a half of muddy water left under the Bridge of Sighs, and ran aground in the Grand Canal as I was going home, I was obliged to give the canals up. I have never recovered the feeling of them. . . ."

(*To* C. E. Norton.) "*May*, 1859.—I went through so much hard, dry, mechanical toil there, that I quite lost before I left it, the charm of the place. Analysis is an abominable business. I am quite sure that people who work out subjects thoroughly are disagreeable wretches. One only feels as one should when one doesn't know much about the matter. If I could give you for a few minutes, as you are floating up the canal just now, the kind of feeling I had when I had just done my work, when Venice presented itself to me merely as so many 'mouldings,' and I had few associations with any building but those of more or less pain and puzzle and provocation;—Pain of frost-bitten finger and chilled throat as I examined or drew the window-sills in the wintry air; Puzzlement from said window-sills which didn't agree with

the doorsteps, or back of house which didn't agree with front; and Provocation from every sort of soul or thing in Venice at once,—from my gondoliers, who were always wanting to go home, and thought it stupid to be tied to a post in the Grand Canal all day long, and disagreeable to have to row to Lido afterwards; from my cook, who was always trying to catch lobsters on the doorsteps, and never caught any; from my valet-de-place, who was always taking me to see nothing, and waiting by appointment at the wrong place; from my English servant, whom I caught smoking genteelly on St. Mark's Place, and expected to bring home to his mother quite an abandoned character; from my tame fish, who splashed the water all over my room and spoiled my drawings; from my little sea-horses, who wouldn't coil their tails about sticks when I asked them; from a fisherman outside my window who used to pound his crabs alive for bait every morning, just when I wanted to study morning light on the Madonna della Salute; from the sacristans of all the churches, who never used to be at home when I wanted them; from the bells of all the churches, which used always to ring most when I was at work in the steeples; from the tides, which were never up, or down, at the hour they ought to have been; from the wind, which used to blow my sketches into the canal, and one day blew my gondolier after them; from the rain, which came through the roof of the Scuola di San Rocco; from the sun, which blistered Tintoret's Bacchus and Ariadne every afternoon at the Ducal Palace; and from the Ducal Palace itself, worst of all, which wouldn't be found out, nor tell one how it was built. (I believe this sentence had a beginning somewhere, which wants an end someotherwhere; but I haven't any end for it, so it must go as it is.)

"There was only one place in Venice which I never lost the feeling of joy in—at least the pleasure which is better than joy; and that was just half way between the end of the Guidecca and St. George of the Seaweed, at sunset. If you tie your boat to one of the posts there you can see the Euganeans, where the sun goes down, and all the Alps and Venice behind you by the rosy sunlight: there is no other spot so beautiful. Near the Armenian convent is, however, very good also; the city is handsomer, but the place is not so simple and lovely. I have got all the right

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feeling back now, however; and hope to write a word or two about Venice yet, when I have got the mouldings well out of my head—and the mud. For the fact is, with reverence be it spoken, that whereas Rogers says: 'There is a glorious city in the Sea,' a truthful person must say, 'There is a glorious city in the Mud.' It is startling at first to say so, but it goes well enough with marble, 'Oh Queen of Marble and of Mud.'"

II

The winter of 1849–50 passed, and Ruskin was still only at the beginning of his work. On his return home, he wrote the first volume and published it (March 1851) separately; but for the completion of the book, further study on the spot was necessary, and in August 1851 Ruskin and his wife started again for Venice,[1] making holiday on the way among the Alps. At Paris they were joined by friends, the Rev. Daniel Moore, their clergyman at Denmark Hill, and Mrs. Moore, who accompanied them for a fortnight, and at Geneva they picked up Charles Newton. Nor among Ruskin's travelling companions should two *Liber Studiorum* plates touched by Turner be forgotten. "You cannot conceive," he writes to his father from Les Rousses (August 11), "the delight I have out of the two with me; they never let me pass a dull moment." It seems to have been a merry party, and Ruskin enjoyed himself thoroughly. His pleasure was increased by falling in at Champagnole with some other friends, Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard (a sister of Osborne Gordon), who attached themselves to the party for some days. At Chamouni Ruskin took his friends to his favourite points—to the wood of the Pélerins, for instance, where they had a picnic, Newton declaring that they were now "in search, not of the picturesque, but of the picnicturesque." There was only one drawback: Ruskin had to act as courier and kept all the accounts. "I assure you," he wrote, "it is not a little

[1] It is convenient to confine this chapter to the two Venetian winters. For account of the intervening period, April 1850 to August 1851, see the next chapter.

puzzling to a person who rarely adds a sum twice with the same result." But his personally conducted party were appreciative and in high spirits. They were in raptures with the Pass of the Great St. Bernard, though they teased him by abusing Chamouni in comparison. At the Hospice they "had a pleasant evening—Effie made the monks play and *sing* not Gregorian chants merely, but very merry and unclerical tunes. I was afraid we should have more banishments to the Simplon."

At Milan Newton left them, and they set their faces towards Venice and the *Stones*. All the while that Ruskin was approaching his Venetian work, he felt it to be only an interlude and an interruption. "I hope to come back here with you," he writes to his parents from Geneva (August 19), "when my Venetian work is off my hands, and I can give myself up again to the snowy mountains which I love better than ever." But arrived at Venice, he soon felt its charm renewed. "It is more beautiful," he writes, "than ever, and I am most thankful to be able to finish or retouch my descriptions on the spot" (September 2). Wherever beauty was to be found Ruskin had the heart to worship it, and whatever his hands found to do he did with all his might. This, as he says in an interesting piece of self-revelation, contained in a letter to his father (Verona, June 2, 1852), was his "genius":—

"Miss Edgeworth may abuse the word 'genius,' but there is such a thing, and it consists mainly in a man's doing things because he cannot help it,—intellectual things, I mean. I don't think myself a great genius, but I believe I have genius; something different from mere cleverness, for I am *not* clever in the sense that millions of people are—lawyers, physicians, and others. But there is the strong instinct in me, which I cannot analyse, to draw and describe the things I love—not for reputation, nor for the good of others, nor for my own advantage, but a sort of instinct like that for eating or drinking. I should like to draw all St. Mark's, and all this Verona stone by stone, to eat it all up into my mind, touch by touch. More and more lovely I find it every time, and am every year dissatisfied with what I did the last."

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It was thus in full zest that Ruskin settled down in Venice to finish his work. He found, as on his previous visit in 1849, an invaluable helper in Rawdon Brown. Another friend was Edward Cheney, who twenty years before had acted as Sir Walter Scott's cicerone in Rome, and now rendered many good offices to Ruskin at Venice. Ruskin much enjoyed the society of Brown and Cheney. "They are both as good-natured as can be," he wrote to his father (October 11), "but of a different species from me—men of the world, caring for very little about anything but Men." But if Rawdon Brown's interest was in men, it was in the famous of old times, and his knowledge of the antiquities of Venice was profound. He had gone to Venice in 1833 to discover the tomb of Mowbray, Shakespeare's "Banished Norfolk," and for fifty years he never left the place. He could never find the heart to revisit England, since it meant leaving Venice. Ruskin in later years had difficulty in finding heart to revisit Venice. "I don't think," he wrote to his old friend in 1862, "I can come to Venice, even to see *you*. I should be too sad in thinking—not of ten—but of twenty—no, sixteen years ago—when I was working there from six in the morning till ten at night, in all the joy of youth."

In such work, at the time with which we are now concerned (1851–52), Brown's help was of the greatest assistance, and is gratefully acknowledged on many a page of *The Stones of Venice*. But the first good offices which Brown rendered were in the matter of lodgings. These were found in a house in the Campo Sta. Maria Zobenigo:[1]—

(*To his Father.*) "*Sept.* 7, 24.—We have got the Baroness Wetzler's apartments, after a great fight for a room which we insisted on having—a room for me to write in; we have this and a kind of hall dining-room, a beautiful drawing-room, double bed-room and dressing-room, three servants' rooms and kitchen, on the Grand

[1] Now the Palazzo Swift, an annex of the Grand Hotel.

Canal, with south aspect, nearly opposite the Salute; and on first floor, for about 17 pounds a month . . . .[1]

"I am now settled more quietly than I have ever been since I was at college, and it certainly will be nobody's fault but my own if I do not write well; besides that, I have St. Mark's Library open to me, and Mr. Cheney's, who has just at this moment sent his servant through a tremendous thunderstorm with two books which help me in something I was looking for. I have a lovely view from my windows, and *temptation* to exercise every day, and excellent food so I think you may make yourself easy about me. . . . For the first time in my life, I feel to be living really in my own house. For I never *lived* at any place that I loved before and have been either *enduring* the locality or putting up with somewhat rough habitation."

Venice under the Austrian domination was a centre of much fashionable and military society, and Ruskin's letters home during this winter tell of many and brilliant gaieties. Many notabilities of the day figure in Ruskin's accounts of their tea-parties or other re-unions. Thus we meet not only the Austrian Governors and Generals, but also the aged Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, one of Napoleon's Marshals:—

(*To his Father.*) "22*nd Feb.* [1852].—I paid yesterday—one of what are now the rarest of my payments—a morning call. Mme. Esterhazy having invited me again and again to see her, I went

[1] Ruskin had "George" with him as factotum; his wife had a maid. George was employed among other things in taking daguerreotypes and as copyist. He also maintained his reputation as humorist. With some difficulty they had a grate with a coal fire fitted up in their apartments: "There were still tongs, poker and shovel wanting to an establishment, which Mr. Brown raked up out of his stores and sent us, and we had a nice scene at the first lighting of the fire; for our gondolier servant, Beppo, had never seen one, and did not believe that coals would burn; and Bastian (Mr. Brown's servant), who came with the fire-irons, thought it necessary to instruct George that the poker 'was to break the coals with,' on which George immediately asked him in a humble manner the use of the tongs; which Bastian having also explained with great gravity, George proceeded to inquire that of the shovel; but there Bastian found him out, and appeared for a moment disposed to let him feel the weight of all the three. It was quite a little bit of Molière." (November 25, 1851.)

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yesterday with Effie for the first time; Marmont came in while we were sitting with her, and cross-examined me not unintelligently respecting the chief styles of the architecture I was examining at Venice. The Countess' house is the prettiest thing I ever saw on a small scale, only wanting some Turner pictures to complete its perfection. It is a corner house, with side windows looking up and down the Grand Canal—every window having its balcony, be it long or short, roofed in, and hung with silk, and filled with flowers. . . ."

There were masked balls, too, and gala nights at the opera; and many private parties in honour of distinguished visitors to Venice, such as the Infanta of Spain, the Duchesse de Berri, Henri Cinq, or the Archduke Albert:—

(*To his Father.*) "VENICE, *Nov.* 20, 1851.—I have not much of interest to communicate to you of my own adventures, but Effie sometimes sees a little of what is going on in the world. She was out last night at one of her best friends', a young Italian Countess, or rather German married to an Italian—Countess Palavicini—a very amiable creature, only strong Austrian, which, as her husband is Italian, is unfortunate; but he is very fond of her—and lives here, instead of at Bologna, where his palace is, that she may see more of the Austrians. She asked Effie last night to come and meet the Archduke Albert, the son of the great Archduke Charles. He came to tea in the quietest English domestic way, or rather in the German way, which is still quieter than the English. . . . He attacked Effie playfully about the Kossuth doings; she pleaded that she was not to answer for them, being Scotch. 'Nay,' he said, 'if Kossuth goes to Glasgow, you will see he will be received quite as well as he is at Birmingham.' . . . He is a great admirer of Palladio at Vicenza, so it was just as well it was Effie there and not me. She gets on very nicely, Lady Sorel says, with the foreigners, not being stiff or shy like most English."

Ruskin took pride in the way in which his wife, accompanied sometimes by himself and sometimes by her Venetian friends, shone in such assemblies. The Austrian High Admiral came to Venice for a launch; she was invited to give the signal. They went on a visit of charity to the Convent of the "Do good" Brethren. "You

will do yourself a great deal of harm at the Carnival," said the Prior to her; "we all know what a dancer you are." "Fancy Effie's fame as a dancer having extended," writes Ruskin, "to the brethren of the Island Convent." There were illuminations on the water to receive the Emperor, his present Majesty Francis Joseph, whom Ruskin describes as "a well-made youth, with rather a thin, ugly, not unpleasant face."

Sometimes, too, Ruskin went with his wife to gaieties at Verona, where the famous Marshal Radetsky, then in his 87th year, had his headquarters. Ruskin had a sincere regard for the old General, who on his part paid both to the English writer and to his wife the most graceful attentions. The description, in a letter home, of one of the Marshal's balls gives a lively account of old-world courtesy:—

"VERONA, 26*th January* [1852].—We arrived here very comfortably at two o'clock, and one of the Marshal's aide-de-camps, Count Thun, was at the station. . . .

"VERONA, 27*th January*.—I have been as busy as I could be all day, in this heavenly city, and so could only send you the line I wrote last night. I will make Effie write you an account of the Marshal's ball; one of the chief points about it was that there was entertainment for *every*body; there were musicians for the dancers, cards for the whist-players, sofas for the loungers, and a library for the readers, with all manner of valuable books laid open, so that instead of having to stand with my back to the wall in a hot room the whole time, I got a quiet seat—and a book of natural history. Effie was well dressed, and allowed by every one to be the *reine du bal*. The old Marshal took her up the room himself to present her to the Maréchale, and then to the Archduke, Charles Ferdinand, another of the sons of the Archduke Charles. The dancing was very much more spirited than ours: till twelve o'clock, when all the ladies were taken down to supper. There had meantime been tea, for all who liked it, in a room beyond the library—not tea handed over a counter by confectioners' girls, as it is in London, making the people's houses look like railway stations, but tea made at a large comfortable table where people sat down and talked, and in

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large cups, the tea-maker being one of the Marshal's aide-de-camps, the Count Thun—the same who met us at the railroad. But at the ladies' supper the old Marshal was head-waiter himself; he went down and stood at the end of the room, just behind Princess Esterhazy's chair, seeing that they all had enough; and not only so, but kept running into the kitchen to order things for them, and at last brought out a bowl of soup himself, keeping his aide-de-camps not less busy the whole time; nor that a short one, for the ladies were exceedingly comfortable, and sat at their supper full three-quarters of an hour. This—we hear from the said Count Thun—was as much in politeness to the Marshal as in kindness to themselves; for he is exactly like my mother, nothing annoys him so much as the idea that people have gone away without having been made comfortable; but especially without having enough to eat. 'Il a toujours peur,' says his aide-de-camp, 'qu'on meurt de faim.' With this substantial attention to all his guests there was great simplicity. The supper looked as if it were meant to be eaten, not to be looked at. There was not a single showy dish nor piece of finery on the table."

"VERONA, *4th June*. . . . We are excessively petted here. Marshal Radetsky sent Effie his picture yesterday, with his own signature. I wish I could write as well, as dashing and firm as if it had been written at 30 instead of 86; and his chief of the staff, who is not now in Verona, left his carriage for us, with all manner of insists on our using it when we wanted; and the Marshal's two aide-de-camps and another young officer came to escort us in our drive in the evening. It was pleasant, after being so long in Venice, to see the young men's riding—the nice, loose, cavalry balanced, swinging seat, and the horses as happy as their masters, but keeping their place beside the carriage to a hair's-breadth."

Ruskin and his wife themselves received occasionally in a quiet way, and gave evening parties to their Austrian and Italian acquaintance. They were sought out, too, by compatriots who chanced to be in Venice. We read, in Ruskin's letters home, of Scott (Sir Gilbert) coming to tea, and "a great architectural séance" afterwards; of an expected visit from the Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce); of "several lectures on the Renaissance" given to Mr. Gibbs, tutor to the Prince of Wales, in the hope of exercising

"influence in that quarter"—lectures which may or may not have been passed on to his late Majesty. Of Lord Dufferin, who came to dinner and to tea, we get a little sketch:—

(*Nov.* 10.) "The Venetians have certainly some reason to think the English odd people. Lord Dufferin was paddling about in the lagoons all the while he was here, in one of those indian-rubber boats which you may see hanging up at the door of a shop in Bond Street. He took it over to Lido and rowed some way in the sea with it; when he landed, an Austrian coast-guard came to investigate him, and wanted to rip up his boat to see what was inside! . . ."

Ruskin was in request as cicerone. Thus we read (Sept. 16): "I showed the Dean (Milman) over the Duomo of Murano yesterday, abusing St. Paul's all the time, and making him observe the great superiority of the old church and the abomination of its Renaissance additions, and the Dean was much disgusted." But we may doubt whether Ruskin had it all his own way, for in a later letter (Sept. 20) we learn that the Dean "is very fond of hearing himself talk and very positive," though "very good and on the whole sensible." English artists preparing pictures of Venice for the exhibitions—E. W. Cooke and David Roberts among the number—foregathered with their critic. Ruskin tells his father how much the paternal sherry was appreciated: "the artists declared it was like the best painting, at once tender and expressive."

But these were only occasional distractions. Nothing was allowed to interfere for long or seriously with the steady prosecution of his work. He gives his father an account of a normal day:—

"Venice, *September* 26.—I rise at half-past six: am dressed by seven—take a little bit of bread and read till nine. Then we have breakfast punctually: very orderly served—a little marmalade with a silver leafage spoon on a coloured tile at one corner of the table; butter very fresh, in ice; fresh grapes and figs, which I never touch, on one side; peaches on the other, also for ornament chiefly—I never take them; a little hot dish which the cook is bound to furnish every morning, a roast beccafico or other little tiny

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kickshaw; before Effie, white bread and coffee. Then I read Pope or play myself till ten, when we have prayers; and Effie reads to me and I draw till eleven. Then I write till one, when we have lunch; then I go out and sketch or take notes till three, then row for an hour and a half; come in and dress for dinner at five, play myself till seven; sometimes out on the water again in an idle way; tea at seven, write or draw till nine, and get ready for bed."

In the days thus spent from September 1851 to June 1852 Ruskin wrote the greater part of the second and third volumes of *The Stones of Venice*. He wrote in full enthusiasm. "My head and heart," he says (Feb. 4), "are altogether in my book." This, however, was but a first draft, and often contained only the descriptive passages for which study on the spot was essential: general reflections, as well as the pruning and polishing of the whole were left over for revision and further work at home.

Neither Ruskin's literary work, nor his artistic pursuits, nor social distractions interrupted his religious studies and exercises. Here at Venice, while at work on *The Stones*, he wrote "a commentary of 90 pages on Job" (Dec. 3). In his home letters, too, there are careful analyses and collations of Bible teaching on various points—on the Psalmist's conception, for instance, of righteousness, and on the relations between rich and poor. Such studies were not merely literary or critical; they tended to edification; they were aids to personal religion. He regrets in one letter that his observance of outward ceremonies—such as his Scripture readings, family prayers, and church-going—did not lead to such true contrition as he could desire. In other letters he discusses with his father the doubts and difficulties that beset him in the manner of Divine revelation, and then comes a piece of religious experience in which doubts and despondency vanish before earnest resolutions and answered prayer:—

"*Good Friday* [*April* 9, 1852]. . . . One day last week I was getting very nervous about the *continual* feeling of relaxation in the throat, though in itself such a trifle. . . . I began thinking

over my past life, and what fruit I had had of the joy of it, which had passed away, and of the hard work of it; and I felt nothing but discomfort in looking back; for I saw that I had always been working for *myself* in one way or another. Either for myself, in doing things that I enjoyed, *i.e.* climbing mountains, looking at pictures, etc.; or for my own aggrandisement and satisfaction of ambition, or else to gratify my affections in pleasing you and my mother, but that I had never really done anything for God's service. Then I thought of my investigations of the Bible and found no comfort in that either, for there seemed to me nothing but darkness and doubt in it; and as I was thinking of these things the illness increased upon me, and my chest got sore, and I began coughing just as I did at Salisbury, and I thought I was going to have another violent attack at once, and that all my work at Venice must be given up. This was about two in the morning. So I considered that I had now neither pleasure in looking to my past life, nor any hope, such as would be any comfort to me on a sick-bed, of a future one. And I made up my mind that this would never do. So after thinking a little more about it, I resolved that at any rate I would act as if the Bible *were* true; that if it were not, at all events I should be no worse off than I was before; that I would believe in Christ, and take Him for my Master in whatever I did; that assuredly to disbelieve the Bible was quite as difficult as to believe it; that there were mysteries either way; and that the best mystery was that which gave me Christ for a Master. And when I had done this I fell asleep directly. When I rose in the morning the cold and cough were gone; and though I was still unwell, I felt a peace and spirit in me I had never known before, at least to the same extent; and the next day I was quite well, and everything has seemed to go right with me ever since, all discouragement and difficulties vanishing even in the smallest things. . . ."

The religious tone and moral purpose which govern the argument and inspire the appeal in *The Stones of Venice* came from the very heart of the man. They were at once his inspiration and his encouragement:—

(*To his Father.*) "*April* 14, 1852.—The fact is one's days must be either a laying up of treasure or a loss of it; life is either

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an ebbing or a flowing tide; and every night one must say, Here is so much of my fortune gone—irrevocably—with nothing to restore it or to be given in exchange for it; or, Here is another day of good service done and interest got, good vineyard digging, for which very assuredly 'whatsoever is right, that I shall receive.'"

The longer letter just cited indicates some unsettlement of Ruskin's early faith, and in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* may be found the first passages in his works which were written in a temper different from the exclusive Protestantism that he came in after years to deplore and denounce. Such a passage as that in the third chapter on the Madonna of Murano heralds his subsequent power of sympathy with every kind of sincere religious emotion, and even of sincere agnosticism.[1] As his own views broadened, so did his power of sympathy expand.

Ruskin's religious exercises were accompanied, it should be added, now as always, by much practical benevolence. "I can this time show you," he writes to his father (January 16, 1852), "*how* the money has gone to the last fraction. I have given a great deal in charity. There is not, I think, one man of the lower classes whom I have ever known in Venice who does not come begging, and with as much justness of claim as habitual improvidence can give to any one." His wife, too, visited the poor and sick, both in the hospitals and in their own homes. Nor were home charities forgotten. In these his father acted as his almoner, and Ruskin sent him the names and addresses of poor and deserving men, struggling artists and others whom he was to search out and help.

III

Occasionally in the letters of this period one finds, too, anticipations of those wider social problems—of the unequal distribution of riches and poverty, of luxury and misery,

[1] See Introduction to *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

which were afterwards to occupy so much of his time and thoughts:— CHAP. XIII.

"(*November* 12, 1851.)—I was rather struck yesterday by three paragraphs in *Galignani*—in parallel columns—so that the eye ranged from one to the other. The first gave an account of a girl aged twenty-one, being found, after lying exposed all night, and having given birth to a dead child, on the banks of the canal near Maidstone, I think—but some English county town; the second was the fashions for November, with an elaborate account of satin skirts; and the third, a burning to death of a child—or rather, a dying after burning—because the surgeon, without an order from the parish, would neither go to see it nor send it any medicine."

In after years—and first, prominently, in *Sesame and Lilies*—Ruskin made much of arguments or appeals from cuttings in the newspapers, arranged by "Fors Clavigera"—by chance, but by chance that hit the nail on the head. During his present sojourn at Venice Ruskin put his thoughts on public affairs into the form of three letters to the *Times*, dealing severally with the principles of taxation, representation, and education. They were not printed at the time, but the manuscript of the first two was found among his papers after his death; the third seems to have been used as the appendix on "Modern Education" in *The Stones of Venice*. The other letters are now included in the Library Edition of his Works, and they form an important episode in Ruskin's life. They reveal the development of his political views, and they were the occasion of some estrangement between father and son. More and more Ruskin had become convinced that there saw something rotten in the state of political society. He was a Republican as against institutions or laws which oppressed the poor; and a Conservative as against theories and reforms which were based on doctrines of liberty and equality. Something must also be allowed for his natural affection for the side of the minority. This is a view he put forward himself in a letter to his father:—

"*Sunday, 16th November* [1851].—I do not suppose that at any previous period of history there has been more open Communism

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coolly announced in the face of all men. The French Revolution was a frenzy begun in a necessary reform of vicious government, but the principles which that frenzy reached at its wildest, becomes now the subject of the after-dinner declamation of our respectable London citizens. There is assuredly a root for all this—desperate abuses going on in governments, and real ground for movement among the lower classes, which of course they are little likely to guide by any very just or rational principle. . . . However, I must mind and not get too sympathising with the Radicals. Effie says with some justice that I am a great conservative in France, because there everybody is radical, and a great radical in Austria, because there everybody is conservative. I suppose that one reason why I am so fond of fish (as creatures, I mean, not as eating) is that they always swim with their heads against the stream. I find it for me the healthiest position."

In this spirit of revolt Ruskin, from his distant eyrie at Venice, surveyed the state of politics in England. Catholic Emancipation had been carried, but Ireland had not been pacified. Chartism had been snuffed out, but the movement for Reform continued. The Corn Laws had been abolished, but the Conservative party under Disraeli were still hankering after a return to protection. Early in 1851 Lord John Russell's Government had been defeated, but, on Lord Stanley's failure to form an administration, had returned to office. But internal feuds between Lord John and Lord Palmerston had led to the resignation of the latter, and then to the tit for tat which caused the defeat of the former. In February 1852, Lord Stanley (Lord Derby) was Prime Minister, with Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader in the House of Commons.

It was at this moment that Ruskin wrote his letters. In the first of them, after a passing sneer at Disraeli as a mere novelist, he discussed the policy of Free Trade, and the principles of taxation—stoutly defending the former, and with regard to the latter advocating direct and graduated taxation. He was only about half-a-century before his time; for he favoured, not only a graduated income-tax, but a super-tax on large incomes. In the

second letter Ruskin advocated a system of universal suffrage combined with what in later discussions were called "fancy franchises." Every man was to have his vote, but votes were to be weighed as well as counted; weight being attached more especially to property and education. This latter test brought him to the subject of a third Letter, in which he discussed the Principles of Education. He pleaded, in the subject-matter of education, that it should include Natural History, Religion, and the elements of Politics; and, with regard to its scope, that it should be National.

This scheme was set forth by Ruskin two years after Carlyle had published his *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, to which work it doubtless owed something of inspiration; it is, however, worth noticing that the disciple's treatment of the theme, if similar in spirit, was more precise and definite than his master's. Ruskin's political writings, now and afterwards, may have been practicable or impracticable; but at any rate they were directed to practical ends; they may have looked towards the sky, but they trod the earth.

Ruskin's father was a Tory of the old school, and an admirer of Disraeli, whose process of educating his party had as yet hardly begun. The Radical pill, which, with some Tory gilding, Ruskin proposed to apply to the body politic, was naturally unacceptable at the domestic headquarters; the Letters, to which the son attached great importance, and which he particularly desired to publish in the then year of grace, 1852, were put on the paternal Index. The correspondence between father and son tells its own story:—

"*March* 14.—I don't know whether you have found my *Times* letters worth sending, or whether the *Times* will put them in, but I rather hope so—not in the hope of their doing any good at present, but because I want to be able to refer to them in future. I was a mere boy when the present design for the Houses of Parliament was chosen—but I said in an instant it was vile. I did not say so in print, because I felt that no one would care

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for a boy's opinion, but I heartily wish now that I had written to the *Times*, and could now refer to my then stated opinion. In like manner I hope the *Times* will put these letters in, for twenty years hence, if I live, I should like to be able to refer to them and say 'I told you so, and now you are beginning to find it out.' And that would give some power—then, however little it may be possible to do at present."

"*March* 29.—I had yesterday your nice long letter from Leeds, but was sorry to hear from my mother that you were annoying yourself because you did not agree with me, and I am sorry that in the midst of your labour in travelling I have caused you the additional work of these long letters. Keep mine until I get home, and then we will talk about them, but do not vex yourself because you think I am turning republican. I am, I believe, just what I was ten years ago, in all respects but one, that I have not the Jacobite respect for the Stuarts which I had then; when I was at College I used to stand up for James II. I have certainly changed no opinion since I wrote the passage in the *Seven Lamps* about loyalty. I meant the word to signify what it really *does* in the long run signify—*loy*-alty, respect for loy or law; for the King as long as he observes and represents law; and a love, not merely of established laws at a particular time, but of the principles of law and obedience in general. As for the universal suffrage in my letter, if you look over it carefully you will see that I am just as far from universal suffrage as you are—and that by my measure, one man of parts and rank would outweigh in voting a whole shoal of the mob. . . . But I hold it a gratuitous and useless insult to make any man incapable of *giving* an opinion: only let the proper weight be attached to his opinion. . . . As for D'Israeli, I have no animosity against him. I know nothing about Wood. D'Israeli's works give me the idea of his being a coxcomb, but clever; only the last person fit to make a Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perhaps Wood was worse; I think it is very likely there may go as much brains to write a bad novel as to make a very good politician, in the modern sense of the term. . . ."

A letter from Ruskin's father (dated Lancaster, 30th March 1852) states his general view on the question, in terms which other and less partial critics have often adopted,

and which must have caused no little chagrin and disappointment to a son whose filial affections were now beginning to be separated from complete intellectual sympathy :— CHAP. XIII.

"I shall see to letters for *Times* on my return, as you so wish it. My feelings of attacks on your books and on your newspaper writing differ from yours in this way. I think all attacks on your books are only as the waves beating on Eddystone Lighthouse, whereas your politics are Slum Buildings liable to be knocked down ; and no man to whom authority is a useful engine should expose himself to frequent defeat by slender forces.

"Your sneer at the age making a clever novelist Chancellor of Exchequer would already have pained yourself. D'Israeli may end weakly, but at present he commands the House, and is a match for Lord John or any man in it, and his adroitness and information are astonishing."

Here, for the time, the matter rested. Ruskin did not press his father any further. The letters, then, were consigned to the shelf, but the views expressed in them remained and developed in Ruskin's mind. Twelve years later they were embodied in his treatise entitled *Unto this Last.* For once his father's judgment was in part at least at fault. So far as Ruskin stood for aristocracy against democracy in the machinery of government, his political edifice has, indeed, been submerged. But the principles of fiscal policy, of taxation, and of national education for which he argued in 1852 have stood, and have been gradually more and more adopted in this country, for sixty years—whatever fate the future may have in store for them. Whether they were indeed firm as Eddystone Lighthouse, the future will show; but the past has already vindicated them from the character of "Slum Buildings." Meanwhile these letters on politics, and the discussion of them with his father, were a distraction from Ruskin's work on *The Stones of Venice.* And yet not wholly a distraction; the thoughts on social and political conditions which thus filled his mind informed some of the most vital and effective passages in that book. It is a signal instance of Ruskin's far-reaching

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range that the same book which gave a new interpretation of a school of architecture contained also a chapter which was to become the gospel of a certain school of socialism.[1]

IV

Two other distractions from his regular work, of a different kind, remain to be mentioned before we leave Venice. On December 19, 1851, Turner died, and though the precise terms of the will were not yet known, Ruskin learnt at once that he had been appointed an executor. The position was to involve him in many worries, but for the moment it filled him with new interests and excitements. These, however, may more conveniently be reserved for a later chapter (XXI.). Another affair which occupied some of his time and thoughts at Venice was the acquisition which he hoped to persuade the Trustees to allow him to make on their behalf of two pictures by Tintoret for the National Gallery. There was an opportunity of securing the "Crucifixion," in St. Cassiano, and the great "Marriage in Cana," of the Salute. Among the Trustees of the National Gallery was Lord Lansdowne, with whom Ruskin had some acquaintance. He opened the subject to the Trustees in March 1852; enlisted the support of Lord Palmerston; and was in correspondence further with Sir Charles Eastlake, who was then President of the Royal Academy as well as a Trustee of the Gallery. The first answers seem to have been encouraging, though Ruskin chafed—as who has not?—at the dilatoriness of official ways. "I have a letter from Sir Charles Eastlake," he writes to his father, on May 16, ". . . with some important report of progress respecting National Gallery and Tintoret. I will enclose you his letter on Tuesday, but must show it to some people to-morrow. I fear nothing can be done—they are too slow, but I am glad to find that I have *some* power, even with such immovable people as Trustees for the National Gallery." The Trustees, meanwhile, were

[1] See below, p. 311.

consulting Edward Cheney, who, as Ruskin afterwards believed, "put a spoke in the wheel for pure spite."[1] The rejection of Ruskin's proposal is recorded in the minutes of a meeting of the Trustees on June 7, 1852:—

"*Read*—A letter from Mr. Ruskin, at Venice, of the 19th May, addressed to Sir Charles Eastlake, and enclosing one from Mr. Cheney, in the former of which Mr. Ruskin stated that he is willing to undertake to procure for this Gallery two pictures by Tintoretto, the 'Marriage at Cana' in the Madonna della Salute, and the 'Crucifixion' in St. Cassiano; the former valued by him at £5000, the latter at £7000. But although he would use his endeavours to procure them at a less cost, he is unwilling to move in the matter, unless the Government will ultimately sanction the expenditure of £12,000 for the two pictures.

"*Resolved*—That the Trustees do not find themselves in a position to ask from the Government so considerable a sum as that required by Mr. Ruskin as the basis of his negotiation for the pictures in question, especially as Mr. Cheney does not entirely concur with him in his valuation of the works, and as the Trustees have not sufficient means of arriving at their true value; they therefore request that Sir Charles Eastlake will be so obliging as to communicate to Mr. Ruskin their unwillingness that he should proceed further in this matter."[2]

So ended Ruskin's attempt to procure for this country two of Tintoretto's finest works. It was his first disappointment, in matters where he was personally concerned, in connexion with the National Gallery. The Turner Bequest was to be attended with other disappointments, yet more poignant—as we shall see hereafter.

The negotiations with the Trustees of the National Gallery kept him at Venice beyond his appointed time; his lease of the Casa Wetzler was up, and at the beginning of May he moved into lodgings in St. Mark's Place. "It is very delicious," he wrote (May 16), "looking *down* upon

[1] *Præterita*, iii. § 29, where Ruskin by a slip of memory dates the transaction in 1845.

[2] *National Gallery Return*, 1847–1852: House of Commons Papers, 1853, No. 104, p. 47.

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the place, as Turner found out long ago when he painted the first picture I defended—'Juliet and her Nurse.'" He was detained at Venice yet further by the theft of some of his wife's jewels. Ruskin had his suspicions, and at one stage of the affair it looked as if he might have to accept a challenge to fight a duel. From this he was extricated by the good offices of Mr. Cheney. But judicial inquiries detained him for some time; and it was the end of June before he and his wife left, homeward bound, with the greater part of the second and third volumes of his book roughed out. They returned by the St. Gothard, and Ruskin stayed a day or two among the scenes of some of his best-beloved Turner drawings:—

"Airolo, *Sunday, 4th July* [1852].—I do not know when I have reached a more delightful place for a Sunday's rest. There is a new inn here, not a fashionable hotel, but small, clean, and Swiss. The weather was lovely yesterday, and this morning is cloudless; and the contrast between the filth and vice of Venice and the purity of the scene which I have before me to-day is intense beyond expression. . . . The scene before my window this morning is one of the most exquisite purity and peace; a good deal like that from our windows at Chamouni, but the green slopes of hill less steep, and softer, all broken into sweet knolls and studded with cottages and clusters of pine, and above them a mass of snowy rocks, not disfigured by débris or glaciers, but with the snow glittering in starry fragments upon their flanks, and crowning them with delicate lines and threads of silver, and the Ticino murmuring in the valley —not a white glacier stream, but clear and blue, and so far away that its sound is like the gentle voice of one of our English streams; and down the valley, promontory beyond promontory of pines, all dim with the morning mist and sunshine. I had no idea Airolo was so beautifully placed, but one must *rest* at a place before it can be known."

Venice was a by-work; it was among the fields and hills that Ruskin felt himself to be upon his native heath.

CHAPTER XIV

CHAMPION OF THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

(1851)

"In the midst of this helplessness came thunder as out of a clear sky—a letter from Ruskin in *The Times* in our defence." —HOLMAN HUNT (*The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*).

OUR scene now changes from Venice to London, and in the chronicle of Ruskin's literary work from architecture to painting. We leave *The Stones of Venice* still in process of being shaped, and *Modern Painters* uncompleted but laid on the shelf, and turn to his championship of the Pre-Raphaelites.

I

After the first of his Venetian winters, Ruskin had returned home by Genoa and the South of France, staying for some days on the road to study the cathedrals of Valence, Vienne, Lyons, and Bourges. He reached England in the middle of April (1850), and, after a short visit to his parents at Denmark Hill, settled with his wife at their house in Park Street for the London season. His impressions of a crush are lively, and might have been written by Dickens :—

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—Horrible party last night—stiff—large —dull—fidgety—strange—run-against everybody—know-nobody sort of party. Naval people. Young lady claims acquaintance with me. I know as much of her as Queen Pomare.[1] Talk. Get away

[1] Queen Pomare of Otaheite (Society Islands) was one of the actors in the "Prichard affair," which had caused some political excitement a few years before the date of this letter. The Queen had made a treaty with France, providing for the occupation of the island, but Mr. Prichard, consul and medical man to the Queen, persuaded her to repudiate it and to appeal for English protection.

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as soon as I can—ask who she is—Lady Charlotte Elliott—as wise as I was before. Introduced to a black man with chin in collar. Black man condescending. I abuse several things to black man, chiefly the House of Lords. Black man says he lives in it—asks where I live—I don't want to tell him—obliged. Go away and ask who black man is. Mr. Shaw Lefevre—as wise as I was before. Introduced to a young lady—young lady asks if I like drawing—go away and ask who she is—Lady Something Conyngham. Keep away with back to the wall and look at watch. Get away at last—very sulky this morning—Hope my father's better—dearest love to you both.—Ever, my dearest mother, your most affec. son."

Ruskin and his wife went also to Court, and the occasions are described in letters to his father:—

"Park St., 4 o'clock, *May* 1850.—I got through excellently well, and I believe did what was right—and I *thought* that Prince Albert put something like markedness into his bow, but that may be his general manner. The Queen looked much younger and prettier than I expected—very like her pictures, even like those which are thought to flatter most—but I only saw the profile—I could not see the front face as I knelt to her, at least without an upturning of the eyes, which I thought would be unseemly—and there were but some two or three seconds allowed for the whole affair. After waiting an hour and three-quarters I think they really might allow people a quarter of a minute each, and time them off. The Queen gave her hand very graciously, but looked bored; poor thing, well she might be, with about a quarter of a square mile of people to bow to. I met two people whom I have not seen this many a day—Kildare and Scott Murray—had a chat with the former and a word with Murray but nothing of interest. Dearest love to my mother."

(*Undated.*) "We got through gloriously, though at one place there was the most awkward crush I ever saw in my life—the pit at the Surrey, which I never saw, may, perhaps, show the like—nothing else. The floor was covered with the ruins of ladies' dresses, torn lace, and fallen flowers; but Effie was luckily out of it, and got through unscathed, and heard people saying, 'What a beautiful dress!' just as she got up to the Queen. It was fatiguing enough, but not so *awkward* as I expected. Effie had no difficulty nor was in any

embarrassment. I hope to be out to-morrow early. Dearest love to my mother." CHAP. XIV.

The gaieties of the London Season did not conduce to speedy progress with *The Stones of Venice*, nor, it would seem, to his satisfaction in any respect. In a letter to his father of Feb. 8, 1852, containing an account of his stewardship of time and health, he says that in the spring of 1850 he "came home very well and set to write my book. But then came three months of society, and late hours; then after a little useless trip in the autumn, good hard work and a great deal of worry with the engravers, writing *Stones of Venice* all winter."

The first volume was published on March 3, 1851. The three parts of the large folio work of illustrative Plates, entitled *Examples of the Architecture of Venice*, appeared successively in May and November of the same year. After the publication of the *Stones*, Ruskin went with his wife on visits to Cambridge[1] and Farnley,[2] and afterwards for a little rest to Matlock. They then returned to London for the season, and Ruskin became engaged in another crusade.

II

Ruskin was now one of the literary figures of the day, and the circle of his acquaintance was widening. He had become known—in what precise way I have never been able to ascertain—to Carlyle. He was a member, though not an habitué, of the Athenæum Club. He was often with Rogers. And he was seeing a good deal of Coventry Patmore. It was through Patmore that Ruskin was drawn into a new interest. It was supposed at the time, and has often been repeated since, that Ruskin was the inspirer of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. On the other hand, by reaction from this view, it is sometimes asserted that Ruskin had nothing to do with the movement. The truth is between the two statements. Ruskin himself afterwards explained that "the painters were entirely original in their thoughts

[1] See above, p. 235.

[2] See below, p. 290.

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and independent in their practice"; but, on the other hand, one at least of them owed some inspiration to his books, and they were all deeply indebted to his encouragement and advocacy. The Brotherhood had been formed, as already related (p. 181), in 1848. In the following year the first pictures with the mystic initials P.R.B had been exhibited. In 1850 had appeared the first number of their organ, *The Germ*, with its motto "to encourage and enforce an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature." In the Royal Academy of 1850 two of the best-known pictures of the school had been shown—Millais's "Christ in the House of His Parents" and Holman Hunt's "Claudio and Isabella." The Brotherhood had thus found and proclaimed its faith, and brought forth works illustrative of it, before Ruskin took up the cudgels on their behalf; and at the time when he did so, he had no personal knowledge of any of them. Nor was the merit of their work at that time his own discovery. He had observed Millais's picture in the Academy of 1850, and had not been very favourably impressed by it. Dyce, the Royal Academician, "dragged me," he says, "literally, up to the Millais picture of 'The Carpenter's Shop,' which I had passed disdainfully, and forced me to look for its merits."[1] It is therefore clear that Ruskin was not directly the inspirer of the Pre-Raphaelites.

They were, however, glad of his help, and it was at the instance of one of their number that this was invoked. The attacks of the critics on the Pre-Raphaelite pictures of 1850 had been very severe: they were penned with the express object, it would seem, of deterring purchasers. "We have great difficulty," wrote *Blackwood's Magazine* of "The Carpenter's Shop," "in believing a report that this unpleasing and atrociously affected picture has found a purchaser at a high price. Another specimen from the same brush inspires rather laughter than disgust." Such attacks were renewed in the notices of the following year's Academy, when Millais showed his "Mariana," "Return of the Dove to the Ark," and "Woodman's Daughter," and Hunt his "Valentine and Sylvia." The *Times* led the way

[1] Letter to Ernest Chesneau, Dec. 28, 1882.

in a violent article, declaring that such work 'deserved no quarter at the hands of the public." "Our strongest enemy," writes Holman Hunt, "advised that the Academy, having shown our works so far, to prove how atrocious they were, could now, with the approval of the public, depart from their usual rule of leaving each picture on the walls until the end of the season, and take ours down and return them to us." Officials of the Academy itself fanned the flame. "In the schools (as we were told) a professor referred to our works in such terms that the wavering students resorted to the very extreme course of hissing us." Other newspapers and magazines afterwards took up the hue and cry, and such attacks were calculated to be very damaging to young artists who had as yet no powerful patrons, and whose means were very narrow. The article in the *Times* filled Millais with alarm and indignation, and he bethought himself of some move to parry the blow. He was acquainted with Coventry Patmore; he had painted a portrait of the poet's first wife, and the subject of one of the pictures in the Academy, denounced by the *Times*—"The Woodman's Daughter"—had been taken from Patmore's piece, so entitled, in his volume of *Poems*. Millais knew that Ruskin was a friend of Patmore, and turned in his anger and vexation to the author of *Modern Painters* for help. Ruskin made a study of the pictures forthwith, and wrote the first of his famous letters to the *Times* on the Pre-Raphaelites, explaining their principles and defending their practice. It appeared on May 13, and was followed up by another on May 30. The champion of the Pre-Raphaelites was already censor of the arts, and hostile critics sneered at his "assumption of a power to bind and loose." But he did in fact wield a power very important to struggling artists—the power to sell. His praises found a purchaser presently for Hunt's picture; and Ruskin himself offered to buy Millais's "Dove." It had, however, already been bought by the artist's friend and first patron, Mr. Combe of Oxford, to whom he wrote in great glee, describing Ruskin's offer: "No doubt you have seen the violent abuse of my pictures in the *Times*, which I believe has sold itself to destroy us. That, however, is

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quite an absurd mistake of theirs, for, in spite of their denouncing my pictures as unworthy to hang on any walls, the famous critic, Mr. Ruskin, has written offering to purchase your picture."

Millais and Hunt posted a joint letter of thanks to Ruskin, who forthwith sought their personal acquaintance. Hunt says that on the day following the receipt of the letter, which had given Millais's address in Gower Street, Ruskin and his wife drove to the house, and after a mutually appreciated interview carried Millais off to their house and induced him to stay with them for a week. "Millais's exuberant interest in human experience, as well as his child-like impulsiveness in conversation, made him in a few days like an intimate of many years' duration."[1] "I have dined and taken breakfast with Ruskin," wrote Millais to Mrs. Combe on July 2, 1851, "and we are such good friends that he wishes me to accompany him to Switzerland this summer. . . . We are as yet singularly at variance in our opinions upon Art. One of our differences is about Turner. He believes that I shall be converted on further acquaintance with his works, and I that he will gradually slacken in his admiration." Hunt's artistic prospects at the time were almost desperate. He had written a letter, but could not tell, he says, "where to find a penny for the stamp." Ruskin's intervention was "as thunder out of a clear sky." "The critic had, amongst other charges, accused our pictures of being false in linear perspective. This was open to demonstration. Ruskin challenged him to establish his case, and the cowardly creature skulked away, and was heard of no more." Ruskin's championship was, in fact, a turning-point in the fortunes of the Pre-Raphaelites. It encouraged the painters themselves, confirmed the wavering opinions of patrons and picture-dealers, and caused many of the critics to reconsider their opinions.

Three years later Ruskin again wrote to the *Times* in praise of Pre-Raphaelite work. In the interval he had lost no opportunity of calling attention to their pictures in other places. Thus in revising the first volume of *Modern*

[1] *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, vol. i. p. 257.

Painters for the fifth edition (1851), he alluded to their works as "in finish of drawing and in splendour of colour the best in the Academy"; then came the pamphlet upon *Pre-Raphaelitism*, next to be noticed; while in *The Stones of Venice* he introduced frequent references to Millais, Rossetti, and Hunt. A lecture on the Pre-Raphaelites at Edinburgh followed in 1853. In the following year's Academy Hunt exhibited one of his greatest works, "The Light of the World." Ruskin had for some time been his friend, and had taken a lively interest in this picture, for which, during its inception, he had suggested the title of "The Watchman."[1] On its completion Hunt had started on a journey to the East, and Ruskin came forward as interpreter of a work which, he felt, needed for its right understanding thought as deep and serious as had gone to its production.

III

In considering Ruskin's relations with the Pre-Raphaelites it must be remembered further that though he had not directly inspired them, yet their practice and their theories were in accord with his teaching, and were in some sort the outcome of a general tendency to which his writings had contributed. We have seen already how Holman Hunt, during his student days at the Academy, had come across the first volumes of *Modern Painters*, and "felt that it was written expressly for him." In revising that volume for a fifth edition, Ruskin came upon a passage which he felt had been written, though he knew it not, expressly for the whole Pre-Raphaelite school. It was the famous passage—often quoted and often, as already said, misquoted—about the young artist "going to nature in all singleness of heart . . . rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing." As he studied the works of the young Pre-Raphaelites, he saw that they had carried out this

[1] *William Holman Hunt*, by F. W. Farrar, *Art Annual* publication, p. 10.

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advice to the letter, and, for their reward, had been assailed with the most scurrilous abuse. He was, therefore, doubly called upon to defend them—for their sake and for his own. This work he set himself in a piece which appeared in the autumn of 1851—the well-known pamphlet entitled *Pre-Raphaelitism*. In this he mentions, as an instance of the violent hostility entertained towards the new school, an anonymous letter which he received the day after his second letter appeared; he defends once more their pictures against the specific attacks made upon them; and hints not obscurely his regret at the Academy's attitude towards the most promising of its students. Then taking broader scope, he seeks a harmony of his conclusions in admiring both Turner, with his imaginative sweep, and the Pre-Raphaelites, with their minuteness of detail. Taking Millais as the typical representative of the school, he draws out a contrast between the natural powers and aptitudes of the two artists. The element that he finds common to both is their sincerity in the study of nature. The turn thus given to the pamphlet was no doubt by way of a reply to criticisms. To the second of his Letters of 1851 the *Times* had made editorial reply, seeking to convict Ruskin, by reference to his praises of Turner, of inconsistency in supporting the Pre-Raphaelites. In preparing his later pamphlet Ruskin met this criticism boldly by placing Turner, as it were, among the Pre-Raphaelites, and Millais, the chief of the Brotherhood, as a Turnerian *in posse*.

The pamphlet on *Pre-Raphaelitism* created some stir in artistic circles, and produced pamphlets, and even a volume, in reply to it. Ruskin himself was well pleased with his own production, which (as he says in a letter) had given him much trouble to compose. "I have the pamphlet *Pre-Raphaelitism*," he wrote to his father from Venice (September 11, 1851), "and think it reads excellently." That was not the opinion of his old enemy in the *Athenæum*, which made merry over the alleged inconsistencies in the argument, and waxed especially wrath over the "vaingloriousness" of the author's Preface. Ruskin's

father duly passed on this critical chastening to his son, who replied in some temper :— CHAP. XIV.

(*To his Father.*) "*Sept.* 9.—It is quite true that preface reads haughty enough ; but, as you say, I cannot write with a modesty I do not feel. In speaking of art I shall never be modest any more."

"(*Sept.* 28.) . . . When I read those reviews of *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I was so disgusted by their sheer broad-faced, sheepish, swinish stupidity, that I began to feel, as I wrote in the morning, that I was really rather an ass myself to string pearls for them. It is not the malice of them—*that*, when it is clever, is to be met boldly and with some sense of its being worth conquering. But these poor wretches of reviewers do, in their very inmost and most honest heart, misunderstand every word I write, and I never could teach them any better."

"In speaking of art I shall never be modest any more." The intention was fulfilled only too well; but when had Ruskin written with any excess of modesty before? "I never could teach them any better." The reader of Ruskin's books will admit, however, that the author did not weary in instructing a perverse generation, and was very well able to give blows as hard as any he received. Ruskin, like every other man of genius, has to be taken as he was. His teaching, one may think, might have been more persuasive, if it had been less dictatorial; but he was not so much a critic, as a crusader.

Meanwhile a private appreciation of *Pre-Raphaelitism* came from a distinguished artist and an old friend, and gave Ruskin much pleasure :—

(*To his Father.*) "VEVAY, *August* 20, 1851.—I am deeply grateful for George Richmond's letter, both to himself and to you for copying it. Such a letter is indeed enough reward for much labour ; but I am at a loss to understand the *depth* of the feeling he expresses, for there is nothing in the pamphlet but common sense, and he, of all men, has no reason to wish that his genius had been otherwise employed. To how many human souls has he given comfort, companionship, memory ; of how many noble intellects has he preserved the image! What could he have done better and have looked back to with greater delight?"

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Pre-Raphaelitism had even more to say about Turner than about the Pre-Raphaelites, and its history from this point of view remains to be noticed. It may, indeed, apart from its title, be called the first of Ruskin's many pamphlets on that painter. It was written after a visit to Farnley. Mr. Walter Fawkes, of Farnley Hall, had been one of the oldest and staunchest of Turner's friends, a warm admirer of his genius, and a constant purchaser of his works. Turner repeatedly visited him between 1803 and 1820, and after his death in 1825 "could not speak of the shore of Wharfe," on which Farnley Hall looks down, "but his voice faltered." At Farnley were preserved, and in large part are preserved still, numerous studies of the Hall and its grounds by the painter, a splendid series of drawings and a few oil-pictures. Ruskin had become acquainted with Mr. Francis Hawksworth Fawkes, the son of Turner's friend, and in April 1851 he and his wife went to Farnley on a visit, that he might study there its art treasures. On the occasion of a later visit in 1884 Ruskin spoke the following words, which were entered by his hostess in the Visitors' Book :—

> "Farnley is a perfectly unique place. There is nothing like it anywhere; a place where a great genius had been loved and appreciated, who did all his best work for that place, where it is treasured up like a monument in a shrine."

To Ruskin at the time of his earlier visit the shrine was still instinct with the spirit of the great genius. The master of the house had known the painter well, and had many reminiscences of him; it is to Mr. Hawksworth Fawkes that some of the not very numerous extant letters of Turner are addressed, and it was he who made from life the well-known caricature-sketch of the little great man. He was able to show Ruskin where Turner had painted this effect or that; to take him on Turner's favourite walks; and to tell him many an anecdote of the drawings and pictures on the walls. Ruskin stayed for several days, and every night he used to take one of Turner's water-colours up to

his bedroom, to look at it the first thing in the morning.[1] Ruskin made brief memoranda of the Farnley pictures and drawings and occasional references to them occur in his books, but it is in the pamphlet on *Pre-Raphaelitism* that his principal notice of them occurs. The pamphlet became indeed an account of Turner, written round the Farnley collection. To Mr. Fawkes, therefore, it was dedicated. CHAP. XIV.

IV

Another pamphlet, put out by Ruskin in this same year (1851), created at the time a yet greater stir than *Pre-Raphaelitism*. This was his *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*—an appendix to *The Stones of Venice*, printed separately "for the convenience of readers interested in other architecture than that of Venetian palaces."[2] The Gothic Revival in England was, it will be remembered,[3] largely associated with a Catholic revival, Roman and Anglican. Ruskin, on the other hand, was at this time a strong and even a bigoted Protestant. It was essential from his point of view to dissociate the two movements; the more so because Pugin, with whose works Ruskin's architectural writings had some superficial kinship, was a convert to Roman Catholicism, and made it his object to "lure" men "into the Romanist Church by the glitter of it."[4] Again, Ruskin's historical references to the Venetian State, and its hostility to the Papal power, had introduced remarks on the proper functions of Church and State, a subject to which Catholic Emancipation, at this time bitterly opposed by Ruskin, had given additional cogency. The first line of thought led him to examine in a spirit of critical hostility the basis of Priestly claims; the second, to consider the basis of anti-Episcopalian doctrines. The result was a treatise on the principles of Church organisation—or, as we may call it with reference to its drift, an

[1] See the article by Mrs. Aycough Fawkes, on "Mr. Ruskin at Farnley," in *The Nineteenth Century*, April 1900

[2] *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. app. 12.

[3] See above, p. 240.

[4] *Stones of Venice*, vol. i. app. 12.

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essay towards Protestant re-union. The architectural title was a natural play on words, suggested by the circumstances in which the essay originated. Those Border farmers, however, who, having bought the pamphlet under the idea that it was a manual of husbandry, cried out that they had been deceived, were not perhaps entirely without excuse. "It is a very capital joke indeed," writes Ruskin to his father (Oct. 20, 1853), "Archie's sending my pamphlet to the farmer. I hope it may do him good."

Although the pamphlet on Church organisation was thus written in a particular connexion, the subject had long been in Ruskin's mind. He refers at the outset to pages in his private diary, and examination of it shows many notes, made at various times, upon the questions discussed in the pamphlet. The method of argument in the pamphlet is characteristic. He was essentially a Bible Christian. He was a constant student of the Bible: he knew it by heart, and the literal text of it was the test to which he brought all statements. The Catholic theory of the Church as the repository of truths not contained in, or at any rate not obviously deducible from, the text of the Bible, was repugnant alike to the Protestant traditions in which Ruskin had been reared, and to the daily practice of his own Scriptural exercises. The conclusion at which he arrived by the application of his Bible test to principles of Church government was that on a Protestant basis the re-union of the Churches was perfectly possible. The High Anglicans had only to renounce their pretensions to "Priesthood," and the Presbyterians to waive their objections to Episcopacy, and then would the text be fulfilled—"And there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." There was a difficulty still in the way—that of Baptismal Regeneration. He tackled it in an *Essay on Baptism* which was found among his papers at his death and has been included in the complete edition of his writings. But apart from this, it was soon made apparent that he had asked more than the rival Churches were willing to grant; but in after years it was to be borne in upon him that his error lay not in too much comprehension but in too much exclusion. "It amazes me to

find," he wrote in the Preface to the edition of 1875, "that, so late as 1851, I had only got the length of perceiving the schisms between sects of Protestants to be criminal and ridiculous, while I still supposed the schism between Protestants and Catholics to be virtuous and sublime."

But this was a lesson still to come. For the moment Ruskin had enough to do to defend even his modest measure of comprehension. The publication of the pamphlet inundated him with correspondence; some of it, commendatory; but more of it, controversial. There were also published replies to his pamphlet—among them one by his friend, William Dyce, the Royal Academician. The "Notes" had to be reprinted almost immediately. Reviews in the newspapers were numerous, and "letters to the editor" followed, as is usual on the track of any religious or ecclesiastical controversy. To these letters and replies Ruskin did not make any published rejoinder. He had another controversy and another pamphlet already on hand—*Pre-Raphaelitism;* and he did not resume the public discussion of sectarian topics till a much later date. But in private correspondence he replied to friendly critics, and a series of these letters, addressed to Dr. Furnivall and F. D. Maurice, has been published.[1] The correspondence with Maurice led presently to a personal friendship, and to Ruskin's interest in the Working Men's College.

V

His industry at this period was as great as it was discursive. During the seventeen months which elapsed between his return from Venice in March 1850 and his start in August 1851 for a second winter there, he had written the first volume of *The Stones of Venice;* prepared the illustrations, and written the text, for the *Examples;* revised the two first volumes of *Modern Painters* for new editions; championed the Pre-Raphaelites; written essays on Baptismal Regeneration and Protestant Re-union. It is no

[1] *John Ruskin and F. D. Maurice on "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds,"* privately printed, 1896; included in the Lib. Ed., vol. xii.

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wonder that after it all he was in need of a holiday. This was the short tour in Switzerland, already described (p. 262), taken *en route* for Venice. He was in high spirits during the tour, and at Venice threw himself with utmost energy into his work. Another new interest, or rather the addition of fresh energy to an old one, belongs to this period. "In 1850 or 51," he says, "I chanced, at a bookseller's in a back alley, on a little fourteenth century Hours of the Virgin, not of refined work, but extremely rich, grotesque, and full of pure colour. The new worlds which every leaf of this book opened to me, and the joy I had, counting their letters and unravelling their arabesques as if they had been all of beaten gold,—as many of them indeed were,—cannot be told." [1] Abounding vitality and unflagging zest are the notes of his life.

[1] *Præterita*, vol. iii. § 18.

CHAPTER XV

THE STONES OF VENICE

(1852–1853)

"Denmark Hill, 1*st May* 1851, morning.—All London is astir, and some part of all the world. I am sitting in my quiet room, hearing the birds sing, and about to enter on the true beginning of the second part of my Venetian work. May God help me to finish it—to His glory, and man's good.—J. Ruskin."

This entry in Ruskin's diary shows the spirit in which *The Stones of Venice* was completed. The reception of the first volume, issued in March 1851, had been very favourable. Miss Edgeworth says that nothing will *satisfy* an author but "large draughts of unqualified praise." Some of his reviewers mixed something of bitter; but with the majority the praise was undiluted. One cupful will here suffice. It is from the *Church of England Quarterly*, which, after taking credit for having been the first of the quarterly reviews to recognise Ruskin's genius, and giving an appreciative summary of his new volume, thus continued:—

"In all societies, whether of literature, science, or art, we hear his name mentioned with respect, not only by those from whom he differs, but by those whose works he has condemned; and we have before us a letter from an artist of no mean mark, who writes to us in somewhat homely phrase, 'He has blown me up; but he has spoken the truth, and I hope to profit by it: he is a glorious fellow!'"

Cultivated readers, themselves of eminence in letters, were of the same opinion. Charlotte Brontë, in sending to Mrs. Gaskell the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, wrote: "I hope you will find passages in it that will please you.

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Some parts would be dry and technical were it not for the character, the marked individuality, which pervades every page." To another correspondent she wrote:—

"The *Stones of Venice* seem nobly laid and chiselled. How grandly the quarry of vast marbles is disclosed! . . . I shall bring with me *The Stones of Venice;* all the foundations of marble and of granite, together with the mighty quarry out of which they were hewn; and, into the bargain, a small assortment of crotchets and dicta—the private property of one John Ruskin, Esq."[1]

Miss Brontë's admiration for Ruskin's work was no doubt passed on to him by Mr. George Smith, the friend and publisher of both. But the encouragement that must have pleased him most was Carlyle's:—

"Chelsea, *March* 9, 1851.—Dear Ruskin,—I did not know yesterday till your servant had gone that there was any note in the parcel; nor at all what a feat you had done! A loan of the gallant young man's Memoirs was what I expected; and here, in the most chivalrous style, comes a gift of them. This, I think, must be in the style *prior* to the Renaissance! What can I do but accept your kindness with pleasure and gratitude, though it is far beyond my deserts? Perhaps the next man I meet will use me as much below them, and so bring matters straight again. Truly I am much obliged, and return you many hearty thanks. I was already deep in the *Stones;* and clearly purpose to hold on there. A strange, unexpected, and I believe, most true and excellent *Sermon* in Stones—as well as the best piece of schoolmastering in Architectonics; from which I hope to learn much in a great many ways. The spirit and purport of these critical studies of yours are a singular sign of the times to me, and a very gratifying one. Right good speed to you, and victorious arrival on the farther shore! It is a quite new 'Renaissance,' I believe, we are getting into just now: either towards new, *wider* manhood, high again as the eternal stars; or else nto final death, and marsh of Gehenna for evermore! . . ."

It was with Carlyle's encouragement in his heart that Ruskin set himself to complete the work of which in the

[1] Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, pocket ed., pp. 383, 368.

first volume he had laid "The Foundations." He found, however, as we have seen (p. 262), that further studies at Venice were necessary; and he did not return home, after his second Venetian winter, till July 1852. He then settled down forthwith to finish his book. He had given up his house in Park Street before going abroad in the previous summer; he could not live any more, he said, "with a dead brick wall opposite his windows." His father had taken and furnished for him a house on Herne Hill (No. 30), next door to his old home, and there he and his wife resided till the following spring. There are but few letters, memorials, or diary-entries of this period (1852–53); it must have been a time of hard and continuous work, with the material for two volumes of *The Stones* to be revised, re-cast, and completed and the plates to be prepared. How busy he was may be gathered from apologetic letters to his friends. "Pray ask Mrs. Harrison to forgive my rudeness," he writes to his old friend and mentor, her husband, "in not having called, but I am tormented by the very gentry of whom Cruikshank was talking, the wood-cutters, until I begin to believe they consider me the block they are to carve upon; and all I can do is to get my run in the forenoon each day—as much open air as possible. I have not been into one house, up the hill or down, save my own and my father's, for a month back." By the end of the year (1852) the second volume was nearly off his hands; it was out early in the following spring, and the concluding volume followed in October.

II

The Stones of Venice, though the three volumes of it thus appeared at different dates, has an informing unity. What Ruskin lacked, said Matthew Arnold, was the *ordo concatenatioque veri*.[1] There is some justice in the criticism; but *The Stones of Venice* has a beginning, a middle, and an end; a sustained argument; a unity of purpose, not seriously interrupted by digressions. The orderly marshalling of

[1] *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. i. p. 51.

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his subject, and the publication of the second and third volumes, so near together as to enable them to be read and reviewed consecutively, added sensibly to Ruskin's already high reputation. The novelty of his views, the ingenuity and knowledge with which they were presented, the imaginative eloquence of his language, made a deep impression. One of his principal themes in the second volume was the glory of Venetian colour, and much of the quality which he described passed into his own pages. The descriptions of the approach to Venice and of the first vision of St. Mark's are familiar to every reader, and not less celebrated is the imaginative piece in which he pictures "that difference between the district of the gentian and of the olive which the stork and the swallow see far off, as they lean upon the sirocco wind." To some of the new notes in Ruskin's message, contained in this book, I shall presently refer, but here it may be remarked in passing that the passages by the way on Dante and Spenser were, with the chapter "Of Imagination Contemplative" in the second volume of *Modern Painters*, among the earliest of his excursions into literary criticism. Even in the most methodical of his books Ruskin digressed, but his readers recognised that what he touched he adorned with fresh and suggestive flashes of insight. If he lacked the gift of "order and concatenation," he abounded, as Arnold added, in "brilliant *aperçus*."

All this was fully recognised in the reviews of the volumes at the time of their publication. "Mr. Ruskin," wrote one critic, "is the first really popular writer we have ever had upon architecture; and, paradoxical as this may seem, it is because he is almost the first truly profound writer we have had on that subject."[1] "The author of this essay," said another, in taking leave of the completed work, "has condensed into it a poetic apprehension, the fruit of awe of God and delight in nature, a knowledge, love, and just estimate of art, a holding fast to fact and repudiation of hearsay, an historic breadth, and a fearless challenge of existing social problems, whose union we know not where to find paralleled."[2] The

[1] *Daily News*, August 1, 1853.

[2] *Spectator*, October 8, 1853.

volumes appeased old enemies and made new friends. "I was surprised," wrote Ruskin to his father (August 1, 1853), "by the *Athenæum*, which I think is intended for a most favourable review; nay, I think it is their idea of eulogium." The *Times*, which had not hitherto noticed any of Ruskin's books, and which indeed in those days allotted very little space to literature, now gave marked and unusual prominence to *The Stones of Venice*. Two long reviews were devoted to the second volume, and another of yet greater length to the third.[1] Ruskin was much gratified with the prominence given to his book in the leading journal, though on particular points many objections were taken to his views. "I am much pleased," he writes to his father (October 2), "with critique in *Times*. It is by a man who has really read the book, and thought over it—incomparably the best critique I ever had."

The Stones of Venice, which detained Ruskin's time and thoughts for three years, to the interruption of *Modern Painters*, occupies an important place in the history both of his own views and of his influence on the art and thought of the time. He himself regarded his work upon Venice as an interlude, a diversion, an interruption. "All that I did at Venice," he says, "was by-work, because her history had been falsely written before. . . . Something also was due," he adds, "to my love of gliding about in gondolas." But he came to recognise that through this by-way he had been led to the heart of the matter. His study of Tintoret (in 1845) had led him "into the study of the history of Venice herself; and through that into what else I have traced or told of the laws of national strength and virtue. I am happy in having done this so that the truth of it must stand."[2] Before coming to the lessons learnt and taught by Ruskin from the stones of Venice I may remark that the digression turned out to lead back to the main theme of *Modern Painters*, which was the history of the art of landscape painting. It was "the Renaissance frosts," Ruskin

[1] The reviews in the *Times* appeared on September 24, October 1, and November 12.

[2] *Præterita*, vol. i. § 180, vol. ii. § 140.

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held, that had killed at once the vital art of architecture, and the love of landscape. He was full of this point as he neared the end of his book:—

"I have now done all the hard dry work," he writes to his father (April 26, 1852), "and I see my superstructure in progress—a noble subject: *Why* is it that we have now no great art, except in landscape, and what the consequences will be, if we continue in this state; while the 'except in landscape' forms, as I told you, the subject of the third volume of *Modern Painters*. All *Modern Painters* together will be the explanation of a parenthesis in the *Stones of Venice*." [1]

Or, to put it the other way round, as Ruskin sometimes did, all the *Stones of Venice* was the explanation of a point in *Modern Painters*. So, again, and more generally, he says in the third volume of *Modern Painters* that the two books "are parts of one whole, divided merely as I had occasion to follow out one or other of its branches: for I have always considered architecture as an essential part of landscape."

This, however, was an *ex post facto* harmony of conclusions. At the time *The Stones of Venice* seemed a digression, and its teaching may properly be isolated and regarded as significant in itself. The main thesis of the book, connecting it with *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, is that architecture is the expression of certain states in the moral temper of the people by and for whom it is produced. This treatment of architecture as an historical document was one of the original and fruitful points in Ruskin's Venetian work, and later studies in Venetian history have on the whole tended to confirm the substantial accuracy of his conclusions in the particular case. If it is said that he made too little of political forces and ignored some commercial factors altogether—especially, for instance, the discovery of the Cape route in 1486, which to the historians had a principal effect in hastening the decline of Venetian supremacy—the answer is that he was dealing with moral causes and conditions

[1] That is, the parenthetical explanation (vol. ii. ch. vi. § 30, vol. iii. ch. iv. § 33) of the manner in which the Renaissance, by destroying the picturesque element in architecture, contributed to divert the love of nature into landscape painting.

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which were long antecedent to that particular event, and of which, as he maintained, political changes were the expression rather than the cause. The question is whether his theory, deduced from the spirit of Venetian architecture, is or is not in general conformity with the other orders of facts upon which general historians are wont exclusively to dwell. The answer is that substantially and with some qualifications Ruskin was right. This is the view of the modern historian of the Republic. "Ruskin," says Mr. Horatio Brown, "carried his theories further than history, faithfully studied, would warrant, but in most cases he had reason on his side. It may be doubted if the year 1418 and the death of Carlo Zeno mark categorically the point at which the history of Venice begins to decline and fall; but, on the other hand, the transition from the Gothic style to that of the Renaissance undoubtedly coincides with a radical change in the character of the Venetian people and in the views and aspirations of the Republic."[1]

Ruskin's work may properly be considered, therefore, to have thrown important light on Venetian history. In regard to Venetian architecture it has been as a revelation. The success of his work in this respect tends to obscure its value. For two generations past Venice has been seen through Ruskin's eyes; it is forgotten that his vision was individual and original. He produced something of the same effect in relation to the architecture of Venice that Turner produced in relation to her scenery of sea and sky. The Venice of all the painters of to-day, whether with the brush or in words, is the Venice of Turner—a city of enchanted colour; but in the eighteenth century the popular Venice was that of Canaletto—a city of murky shadows. When we now read in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* that the Ducal Palace is "a model of all perfection," we may or may not entirely agree, but the judgment does not surprise us as a paradox. And when we are told that the facade of St. Mark's is "a lovely dream," we are most of us inclined to acquiesce, and few, if any, are startled into indignation. But when Ruskin

[1] Translated from an article in the *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, vol. xix. (1900).

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wrote, the architects of the time regarded such opinions as indicating the wildest caprice, if not as evidence of insanity. Professional opinion was that St. Mark's and the Ducal Palace were as ugly and repulsive as they were contrary to rule and order. The first volume of *The Stones* called forth an answer by "An Architect" — and at the end of the brochure there is a list, showing a merry wit, of "Works promised but not yet produced." This is headed as follows:—

> *An attempt to demonstrate the loveliness of St. Mark's at Venice.*—By a Candidate for *St. Luke's.*

The architecture which Ruskin loved was denounced as an unlovely "nightmare." The general public did not, perhaps, entirely share such views, but Gibbon is worth citing as an example of educated and cultured opinion in the eighteenth century:—

> "Of all the towns in Italy," he writes to his stepmother on April 22, 1765, "I am the least satisfied with Venice. Objects which are only singular without being pleasing produce a momentary surprise which soon gives way to satiety and disgust. Old, and in general, ill-built houses, ruined pictures, and stinking ditches, dignified with the pompous denomination of canals, a fine bridge spoilt by two rows of houses upon it, and a large square decorated with the worst architecture I ever saw."

The "worst architecture" alluded, one may imagine, not to the Renaissance arcades but to the church, the palace, and the campanile.[1] It would be as easy to multiply instances of depreciation of the Byzantine and Gothic architecture of Venice in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as to adduce echoes of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* from subsequent literature. The novelty of Ruskin's

[1] Disraeli in *Contarini Fleming* admires the Palladian churches, and writes of "the barbarous although picturesque buildings called the Ducal Palace." Dickens, on the contrary, was a Ruskinian. In his *Pictures from Italy* (1846) he is disappointed with St. Peter's at Rome, and has "a much greater sense of mystery and wonder in the Cathedral of San Mark at Venice." He also greatly prefers Tintoret to Michael Angelo (pp. 167, 209).

views comes out very clearly in one of the contemporary reviews:— CHAP. XV.

"His chief architectural service consists in the light he has thrown upon Lombard, and especially Venetian architecture, which, until the appearance of the *Seven Lamps* and the *Stones of Venice*, was popularly regarded as the result of the 'barbarous' taste to which in Wren's and Evelyn's time even the pointed Gothic was attributed. He has proved to the hearts as well as to the heads of his readers that the Lombard architects were artists of profound and tender feelings, and that the ignorance and want of principle which has been attributed to them has only existed in ourselves. In the cases in which we felt best fortified against a good opinion of the mediæval architecture of Italy, Mr. Ruskin has met us and overthrown our theoretical objections with the most startling and unanswerable pleas. For example, the architecture of St. Mark's at Venice has, from of old, been the butt for students, as well of the classic as of the Gothic schools, to aim their wit at. Its ill-shaped domes; its walls of brick incrusted with marble; its chaotic disregard of symmetry in the details; its confused hodge-podge of classic, Moresque, and Gothic were strong points in the indictment. But Mr. Ruskin comes and assures us," etc., etc. (*Daily News*, August 1, 1853).

Ruskin's work upon the early architecture of Venice was original and fruitful in relation both to the Byzantine and to the Gothic styles. He justly claims for himself in conjunction with Lord Lindsay the position of a pioneer (in this country at any rate) in the appreciation of Byzantine art.[1] It is now well known and understood that the Church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople exercised a wide influence on the architecture both of the East and of the West. Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, with its elaborate account of St. Mark's—one of the buildings which derive from St. Sofia—had much effect in arousing interest in Byzantine architecture. "The half century that has passed since he wrote has thrown a flood of light," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "upon the history of Byzantine art and its far-radiating influence on all forms of art in the West. It is a remarkable instance of Ruskin's genius that, long before the special

[1] *Seven Lamps*, ch. iii. § 15 (note of 1880).

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studies in Southern Italy and the Mediterranean seaboard which have given us so much new information, he does seem to have said nothing which the later studies have disproved, if, indeed, he does not seem from time to time implicitly to have felt the truth."[1] In the present day the study of Byzantine art has led to an adoption of Byzantine architecture, of which Mr. Bentley's Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, now in process of being incrusted internally with marble and mosaics, is so conspicuous an illustration. It is thus not unreasonable to trace back to *The Stones of Venice*, with its vindication of St. Mark's from the charge of barbarism, some share in the influences which have led to a Byzantine Revival. In his study of the details of St. Mark's, again, Ruskin broke new ground, at any rate for English readers. The elaborate works on the subject which now exist were subsequent to his book and owed their origin to his enthusiasm. He described the church as an illuminated Bible, and he was the first English writer who devoted any serious attention to reading its letters. He has been followed by many writers, English, French, and Italian. Signor F. Ongania, of Venice, in the preface to his sumptuous and elaborate series of volumes on St. Mark's (1881–88), describes the magnitude of his undertaking and his discouragements; but, he adds, "there served to inspire him with courage the voice and the wise counsels of the celebrated English writer, John Ruskin," to whom accordingly he dedicated the English translation.[2]

In the study and appreciation of the Gothic of Venice, as well as in the vindication of its Byzantine basilica, Ruskin

[1] *John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 71. Mr. Harrison has given an interesting sketch of the influence and character of the arts of Constantinople in his Rede Lecture, *Byzantine History of the Early Middle Ages*, 1900: see especially pp. 29–33.

[2] The reader who now visits St. Mark's should remember that the building has been much "restored" since Ruskin wrote. The north and south fronts of the church have been refaced and to some extent rebuilt; the south-west portico has been reconstructed; some of the pavement inside has been re-laid; and on the cathedral generally many of the old Greek marbles have been replaced by inferior Carrara. A similar remark applies to the Ducal Palace, which has been very largely "restored" since Ruskin described it.

was again a pioneer. "No one," he says, "had ever drawn the traceries of the Ducal Palace till I did it myself . . . ; and not a soul in England knew that there was a system in Venetian architecture at all, until I made the measured (to half and quarter inches) elevation of it, and gave the analysis of its tracery mouldings and their development from those of the Frari." The Gothic Revival in England did not originate with Ruskin, but he gave to it a stimulus and an extension. He introduced Venetian Gothic into the movement; he made it popular, and gave to it the force derived from his resources of argument, imagination, and eloquence. "We do not remember anything in the history of art in England," wrote a reviewer in the year following the completion of *The Stones of Venice*, "at all corresponding in suddenness and extent to the effect which the works of Mr. Ruskin have already exercised upon the popular taste directly, and through popular taste on the taste and theories of artists themselves."[1] The character of this influence has been traced by the historian of the movement:—

"Students who, but a year or so previously, had been content to regard Pugin as their leader, or who had modelled their works of art on the principles of the *Ecclesiologist*, found a new field open to them and hastened to occupy it. They prepared designs in which the elements of Italian Gothic were largely introduced; churches in which the 'lily capital' of St. Mark's was found side by side with Byzantine bas-reliefs and mural inlay from Murano; town halls wherein the arcation and baseless columns of the Ducal Palace were reproduced; mansions which borrowed their parapets from the Calle del Bagatin, and windows from the Ca' d'Oro. . . . They made drawings in the Zoological Gardens, and conventionalised the forms of birds, beasts, and reptiles into examples of 'noble grotesque' for decorative sculpture. They read papers before Architectural Societies, embodying Mr. Ruskin's sentiments in language which rivalled the force, if it did not exactly match the refinement, of their model. They made friends of the Pre-Raphaelite painters (then rising into fame), and promised themselves as radical a reform in national architecture as

[1] *North British Review*, May 1854, in a notice of *The Stones of Venice*, vols. ii. and iii.

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had been inaugurated in the field of pictorial art. Nor was this all. Not a few architects who had already established a practice began to think that there might be something worthy of attention in the new doctrine. Little by little they fell under its influence. Discs of marble, billet-mouldings, and other details of Italian Gothic crept into many a London street-front. Then bands of coloured brick (chiefly red and yellow) were introduced, and the voussoirs of arches were treated after the same fashion. But the influence of Mr. Ruskin's teaching reached a higher level than this, and manifested itself in unexpected quarters. Years afterwards, in the centre of the busiest part of our busy capital—the very last place one would have supposed likely to be illumined by the light of *The Seven Lamps*—more than one palatial building was raised, which recalled in the leading features of its design and decoration the distinctive character of Venetian Gothic."[1]

A Gothic building which Ruskin much admired is the Assize Courts at Manchester, erected in the years 1859–64 from the designs of Waterhouse. "Much beyond everything yet done in England on my principles," wrote Ruskin to his father (Dec. 9, 1863); "the workmen were pleased to see me; the clerk of the works, when he was a youth, copied out the whole three volumes of the *Stones of Venice* and traced every illustration." Mr. Eastlake mentions a curious evidence of the extent to which Ruskin's architectural writings had impressed themselves upon the life of the time. The Latin Epilogue to the Westminster Play is generally a reflex of some popular taste or current topic of sufficient notoriety to afford scope for good-humoured satire. In 1857 the epilogue to the *Adelphi* of Terence contained the following dialogue:—

> *Ctesipho.* Græcia in hac ὕλῃ palmam fert semper.
> *Æschinus.* Ineptis!
> Est cumulus nudæ simplicitatis iners.

[1] *A History of the Gothic Revival*, by Charles L. Eastlake, 1872, pp. 278–280. Mr. Eastlake's volume is copiously illustrated, and contains in an appendix a list of "selected examples of Gothic buildings," with dates and other particulars, from which the development of the Revival and Ruskin's influence upon it may be traced.

Ars contra mediæva haud lege aut limite iniquo
Contenta, huc, illuc, pullulat ad libitum. . . .
Ctesipho. An rectum atque fidem saxa laterque docent?
Æschinus. Graiâ et Romanâ nihil immoralius usquam
Archi—est—tecturâ—(*turning to "The Seven Lamps"*) pagina sexta—tene.
Sic ipsus dixit.
Ctesipho. Vix hæc comprendere possum
Æschinus. Scilicet Æsthesi tu, miserande, cares.

And every reader will remember the lines in Charles Kingsley's "The Invitation—To Tom Hughes" (1856):—

"Leave to Robert Browning
Beggars, fleas and vines;
Leave to mournful Ruskin
Popish Apennines,
Dirty stones of Venice,
And his Gas-lamps Seven—
We've the stones of Snowdon
And the lamps of heaven."

Ruskin also had his heavenly lamps and the stones of Chamouni beneath them, but Kingsley's lines were not, of course, to be taken seriously.

Two points may specially be noticed in which Ruskin's work gave a new turn to the architectural movement of the day. The Gothic Revival, as above stated, was largely bound up with Catholicism, Roman and Anglican. Ruskin put the movement on a Protestant basis, and thus won for it a hearing in circles where it had hitherto been suspect. So, again, the movement had been mainly ecclesiastical. Ruskin made it civic. He showed that when an architecture is truly national its spirit pervades alike the temple and the palace; he illustrated—both in *The Stones of Venice* and again in his Edinburgh *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*—the derivation of ecclesiastical forms from civil buildings, and he contested vigorously the popular idea that Gothic was good only for churches. "It was one of the purposes of *The Stones of Venice*," said Ruskin in his inaugural *Lectures on Art* at Oxford, "to show that the lovely forms of cathedral domes and porches, of the vaults and arches of their aisles, of the canopies of their tombs, were every one of them developed in civil and domestic

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building." It is significant that of the modern buildings which may be traced most directly to Ruskin's influence, one was a museum, another an insurance office, and the third a palace of justice.

It is the fate of every movement to pay the penalty of success in being caricatured and vulgarised. Ruskin makes complaint of this in the preface to the third edition of *The Stones of Venice* (1874). "No book of mine," he there says, "has had so much influence on contemporary art," and goes on to deplore the mottling of manufactory chimneys with black and red brick and the introduction of Italian Gothic into the porches of public-houses. This order of Victorian architecture, which has sometimes been distinguished as the streaky bacon style, is indeed unlovely enough, and Ruskin condemned it whole-heartedly. At the time when he was leaving his house at Denmark Hill for Brantwood, some one had said that his direct influence on architecture was always wrong, and his indirect influence right. He begged in reply to be further instructed in this matter:—

"because, if that be so, I will try to exercise only indirect influence on my Oxford pupils. But the fact to my own notion is otherwise. I am proud enough to hope, for instance, that I have had some direct influence on Mr. Street; and I do not doubt but that the public will have more satisfaction from his Law Courts than they have had from anything built within fifty years. But I have had indirect influence on nearly every cheap villa-builder between this and Bromley; and there is scarcely a public-house near the Crystal Palace but sells its gin and bitters under pseudo-Venetian capitals copied from the Church of the Madonna of Health or of Miracles. And one of my principal notions for leaving my present house is that it is surrounded everywhere by the accursed Frankenstein monsters of, *in*directly, my own making."

"For Venetian architecture developed out of British moral consciousness I decline," he says again, "to be answerable." Of a building for which he did answer—the Museum at Oxford—we shall hear in a later chapter (XXII.). By one of the same architects was the Crown Life Insurance Office

(1855) in New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, of which Rossetti said: "It seems to me the most perfect piece of civil architecture of the new school that I have seen in London. I never cease to look at it with delight."[1] But Ruskin for his part feared that the effect produced by his preaching and by the practice of architects such as Benjamin Woodward was only transitory. "The architecture we endeavoured to introduce is inconsistent," he wrote, "alike with the reckless luxury, the deforming mechanism, and the squalid misery of modern cities; among the formative fashions of the day, aided, especially in England, by ecclesiastical sentiment, it indeed obtained notoriety; and sometimes behind an engine furnace, or a railroad bank, you may detect the pathetic discord of its momentary grace, and, with toil, decipher its floral carvings choked with soot. I felt answerable to the schools I loved, only for their injury."[2]

What has been spoken of as the Gothic Revival was, however, it should be remembered, not merely a crusade to advocate a particular style of architecture, it was part of a movement directed towards enlisting better enthusiasm in the pursuit of the art, and attracting to it greater public interest and support. From this point of view Ruskin's aid was, as already has been pointed out (p. 237), of the highest value. It is worth noting that in 1852 was held the first architectural exhibition, and two years later was founded the Architectural Museum.

III

It may be doubted, however, whether the influence of *The Stones of Venice* was not greater in the social than in the artistic sphere. We have seen how already in *The Seven Lamps* Ruskin had been drawn from the artistic side of his subject to consider questions relating to the organisation of labour. The test of good ornament, he had

[1] *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham*, 1897, p. 145.

[2] "The Mystery of Life and its Arts," in *Sesame and Lilies*, § 104.

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found, was this—was it done from the heart? was the workman happy while he was about it? Then, at Venice, his thoughts were again turned to a point at which his artistic analysis, his social interests, and his historical inquiries seemed to converge. As he considered the essentials of Gothic architecture, he became more and more convinced that its virtue was found in the free play of individual fancy; that the highest achievements had only been possible when the artist was a craftsman and the craftsman an artist. "The chief purpose," he wrote in after times to Count Zorzi, in the letter already quoted, "with which, twenty years ago, I undertook my task of the history of Venetian architecture, was to show the dependence of its beauty on the happiness and fancy of the workman, and to show also that no architect could claim the title to authority of *magister* unless he himself wrought at the head of his men, captain of manual skill, as the best knight is captain of armies." So it had been, he found, in Venice—in the days of the best health and strength of the Republic. Must it not be so also in modern states, if they were to consist of communities, healthy in their organisation, happy in their activities, and free in their constitution—in that positive sense of freedom which means liberty to all men to make the best of their capacities? What he found positively in his study of Gothic architecture, he found also negatively in that of the Renaissance at Venice. When art was reduced to formalism its vitality was gone; and "the Fall" was of the State, as well as of its architecture. The third volume thus connected itself closely with the central chapter in the second. Ruskin's thoughts at Venice were much given to the political and social mysteries of life—the inequalities of worldly fortune, the existence side by side of idle luxury and servile toil. He had written, also, his first essays on questions of politics and political economy (p. 273). He had been brought into personal contact with popular revolutionaries, and with the Austrian officers of law and order. He sought for some synthesis of all these things, and he found it in the central pages of the sixth

chapter of the second volume, on "The Nature of Gothic Architecture," and on the true functions of the workman in art. True art, he said, can only be produced by artists; true freedom is the freedom of the soul. "There might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line." This chapter, said Ruskin in the following year, 'was precisely and accurately the most important in the whole book."[1]

"I should be led far from the matter in hand," he wrote, "if I were to pursue this interesting subject." He was to be led far in later years; and at the time the effect of his words was far-reaching, too. Nowhere did the seed sown in that chapter fall upon more fruitful ground than at Oxford, where Burne-Jones and William Morris were undergraduates. "Ruskin became for them," says Morris's biographer, "a hero and a prophet, and his position was more than ever secured by the appearance of *The Stones of Venice* in 1853. The famous chapter on 'The Nature of Gothic Architecture,' long afterwards lovingly reprinted by Morris as one of the earliest productions of the Kelmscott Press, was a new gospel and a fixed creed."[2] In his preface, Morris tells us what effect Ruskin's words had upon him, and what was his estimate of their significance. The chapter is, he says, "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century," and "to some of us when we first read it, it seemed to point out a new road on which the world should travel." Morris in after years was to throw himself with fiery zeal into an endeavour to drive the world along that road; and there were others at the time who felt, like those eager undergraduates at Oxford, that this chapter was essentially

[1] *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, 1854, § 76.

[2] *The Life of William Morris*, by J. W. Mackail, 1899, vol. i. p. 38.

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a tract for the times. The first suggestion for a separate publication of the chapter seems to have come from Dr. John Brown. In sending on a letter from Brown, Ruskin writes to his father (Aug. 1, 1853): "Please notice what he says about publishing sixth chapter cheap, separate—'The Nature of Gothic'—for railway reading. Would you propose this to Mr. Smith?" Nothing seems to have come of the suggestion for the moment, but in the following year it was adopted in another form. The story has been told by the prime mover in the matter, Dr. Furnivall:—

"The first reprint of this grand chapter of *The Stones of Venice*, and its sub-title, 'And Herein of the True Functions of the Workman in Art,' were due, not to the 'Master' himself, but to his humble disciple and friend—myself. Through my sending him a prospectus of our Working Men's College, Ruskin kindly offered to help us, and take the art classes. We were to hold our opening meeting in Hullah's Hall, in Long Acre, at the corner of Endell Street, where the big coach factory now is. I felt that we wanted some printed thing to introduce us to the working men of London, as we knew only the few we had come across in our co-operative movement, and all our Associations had failed. F. D. Maurice had written nothing good enough for this purpose, but Ruskin had. So I got leave from him and his publisher, Mr. George Smith, to reprint this grand chapter, 'On the Nature of Gothic'; and I had to add to it the sub-title, 'And Herein of the True Functions of the Workman in Art,' to show working men how it touches them. I had 'Price Fourpence' put on the title; but we gave a copy to everybody who came to our first meeting—over 400—and the tract well served its purpose. Afterwards an orange wrapper and a folding woodcut from the *Stones* were added to the reprint, and it was sold at 6d. for the benefit of the college."[1]

It is not often that the preacher of a new gospel finds his words taken up thus promptly as the text for practical effort. Through these cheap reprints some of the central and most characteristic passages of Ruskin's teaching found opportunities of influence in a wide circle. The Kelmscott

[1] *The Daily News*, April 4, 1899.

reprint of 1892 was an expensive book, intended for the few; but the chapter was again issued at a cheap price, in 1899, with Morris's preface, and has once more had a large popular sale.

IV

On the morning of July 14, 1902, after a life in part of exactly a thousand years, the famous Campanile of St. Mark's fell crashing to the ground. Three years later, when a new Campanile was being erected, there was a meeting held in the Ducal Palace to commemorate Ruskin's Venetian work. The orator on the occasion connected the two events:—

"Gentlemen, thanks to you, the sailors of the future will see again the Tower of St. Mark clear on the horizon—that wonderful straight column that our eyes always sought, that they seek, but in vain, to-day, which rises from the soil of your city like a beam of light sent from the earth to heaven. You have already begun the work; we can hear, from this place, the rattling of the hammers on the stone. We may hope that it will ere long be accomplished. To-day, however, you are engrossed with another monument. Your memory recalls the great figure of Ruskin to your imaginations, and from henceforth, so you will it, we shall meet that figure everywhere, at the threshold of St. Mark as at the Tower of Torcello, near the Madonna of the Garden as at the foot of the dead Doges at San Zanipolo.

"And this monument that you raise to Ruskin, immaterial as it is, has no need to fear the fate of the Campanile. Whatever earthquakes may befall, it will for ever appear clear, luminous to the navigator (and we are all navigators), to the men of the twentieth century who seek for a lighthouse and a port.

"Our eyes will see it—never. Our hearts will find it everywhere."[1]

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[1] *Ruskin at Venice: a Lecture given during the Ruskin Commemoration at Venice, September 21, 1905*, by Robert de la Sizeranne, translated by Mrs. Frederic Harrison.

CHAPTER XVI

WITH MILLAIS IN GLENFINLAS

(1853)

"For work we must, and what we see, we see,
And God he knows, and what must be, must be."—CLOUGH.

RUSKIN was exhausted after his work on *The Stones of Venice*, and, as soon as the book was off his hands, decided to take a long holiday with his wife in Scotland. He needed rest, and he desired a quiet time during which to think out a course of lectures which he had undertaken to deliver at Edinburgh in the autumn. He spent several weeks in the company of Millais in Glenfinlas, and this sojourn was destined to have an influence upon the private fortunes of both men.

I

Ruskin was essentially a missionary and a preacher. He had accepted the invitation to lecture with alacrity as an opportunity for widening his circle of influence. In the choice of travelling companions for his summer holiday he saw an opportunity also for didactic enterprise. He had a profound admiration for the genius of Millais, into whose defence he had entered enthusiastically two years before. He had a firm belief in the great work of which the genius of his friend was capable, if rightly directed. As was the case with Rossetti, a year or two years later, so now with Millais: Ruskin wanted to keep his eye, as it were, on the young artist, to mould the ripening genius into accord with his own ideals, to instruct him in the way he should go. Millais also was in need of a holiday after a long spell of work, and Ruskin proposed that they should go north together.

The holiday party consisted of five persons: Ruskin and his wife, Miss M'Kenzie, who was a friend of the latter, Millais and his brother William. They went first to Wallington, on a visit to Ruskin's friends, Sir Walter and Lady Trevelyan. This was his first visit to a house where he was often afterwards to stay. Ruskin in after years had "no memory, and no notion when he first *saw* Pauline, Lady Trevelyan"; already in 1851 they were fast friends. "I enclose a letter for Lady Trevelyan," he writes to his father from Venice (Sept. 22, 1851), "which after reading please seal and send. Her letter is enclosed also, which I am sure you will like—you will see she is clever; if you knew how good and useful she was also, you would be flattered by her signature to me—'your own dutiful and affectionate scholar.'" It was at Wallington also that Ruskin first met a man who became one of his dearest friends, Dr. John Brown. On the same occasion he visited Sir John Swinburne at Capheaton in order to see his Turners.

After a stay of some days at Wallington, the party set out for the Trossachs, travelling by stage-coaches. They took the journey leisurely, and visited many picturesque romantic places on the way, such as Melrose, Stirling, and Dunblane. Millais and his brother found apartments in the New Trossachs Hotel, but took most of their meals with the Ruskins, who were accommodated in the schoolmaster's house, at Brig o' Turk, a few hundred yards away. They were a merry party, and in spite of constant rain the days passed cheerily. "Both Millais and I," wrote Ruskin to Miss Mitford (August 17), "came down here to rest; he having painted, and I corrected press, quite as much as was good for either of us; but he is painting a little among the rocks, and I am making some drawings which may be useful to me; and when either of us are tired we go and build bridges over the stream, or piers into the lake, or engage in the more laborious and scientific operation of digging a canal to change the course of the stream, where it is encroaching on the meadows." Millais was in the same holiday mood. "This year," he wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Combe, "I am giving

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myself a holiday, as I have worked five years hard. . . . Ruskin comes and works with us, and we dine on the rocks all together. . . . We have in fine weather immense enjoyment painting out on the rocks, and having our dinner brought to us there, and in the evening climbing up the steep mountains for exercise, Mrs. Ruskin accompanying us." On wet days and in the evenings there were discussions on art or Scottish history. Millais would make fun of the old masters, or draw sketches for a comic history of Scotland. Several of his sketches are given in the Life of him by his son. One of them shows a game of battledore and shuttlecock; Ruskin does not figure in it, but Dr. Acland, who was on a visit to Ruskin, is taking a hand. Of the party in a more serious mood, we get a glimpse in letters from Dr. Acland. He was impressed by the intensity of Millais. "The point is in his work, and not in his words. He is a man with powers and perception granted to very few; not more imagination, not more feeling, but a finer feeling and more intuitive and instantaneous imagination than other men. Of this his nonsense affords the most striking proof." On Ruskin, Millais had made the same impression:—

"Millais is a very interesting study," he writes to his father (July 24), "but I don't know how to manage him; his mind is so *terribly* active, so full of invention that he can hardly stay quiet a moment without sketching either ideas or reminiscences; and keeps himself awake all night with planning pictures. He cannot go on this way; I must get Acland to lecture him."

By Ruskin's own earnestness and enthusiasm Acland was profoundly struck. "Ruskin," he writes, "has knocked off my sketching for ever, having quite convinced me that the paltry drawings I have been in the habit of doing are most injurious to the doer in his moral nature. What I can try to do is to draw something really well. I hope to be well enough to try to-morrow a bit of rock and water." And again: "Ruskin I understand more than I have before; truth and earnestness of purpose are his great guides, and no labour of thought or work is wearisome to him"; and

again, "I ought to say, as a key to Ruskin, I had no idea of the intensity of his religious feeling before now."[1]

Though both Ruskin and Millais went to Scotland for relaxation, they stayed to work. Millais's principal work was his famous portrait of Ruskin. It was at Acland's suggestion that this portrait of Ruskin standing on the rocks, with the torrent thundering beside him, was undertaken. Ruskin was rejoiced, seeing in this work the promise of such a loving and faithful study of wild nature as had never yet been accomplished:—

(*To his Father.*) "*July* 6.—Millais has fixed on his place, a lovely piece of worn rock, with foaming water and weeds and moss, and a noble overhanging bank of dark crag; and I am to be standing looking quietly down the stream; just the sort of thing I used to do for hours together. He is very happy at the idea of doing it, and I think you will be proud of the picture, and we shall have the two most wonderful torrents in the world, Turner's 'St. Gothard' and Millais' 'Glenfinlas.' He is going to take the utmost possible pains with it, and says he can paint rocks and water better than anything else. I am sure the foam of the torrent will be something quite new in art."

Ruskin's diary is also full of Millais's picture. He kept a sort of time-table of the number of hours' work put into the picture each week—in the first week, four days, from 11 or 12 to 5 or 6; next week, three days 11–5, two 4–7; third week, four days 1–5, one 4–7; fourth week, three days 12–6; fifth week, three days, "a good forenoon"; sixth week, a "good three hours," on four days; seventh week, "good days, about three hours each"; eighth week, only two "good days"; ninth, three "good forenoons"; on two other days, an hour each; the tenth and last week recorded showed three "excellent days." The portrait was not completed till the following winter, for on January 12 and 19, 1854, there are entries in Ruskin's diary of sittings to Millais.

[1] *Sir Henry Wentworth Acland, Bart., K.C.B., F.R.S.: A Memoir*, by J. B. Atlay, pp. 173–174.

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Ruskin himself made many drawings at Glenfinlas; but his chief work at this time was the preparation of the Edinburgh lectures. The suggestion that he should give these lectures came from his friend J. F. Lewis, the painter, and it pleased him. But his father and mother did not like the idea. They seem to have thought that there was something derogatory in appearing on a platform as a public lecturer; or perhaps, though they put it in that way, they were afraid of their son overstraining his powers: and Ruskin's father, who was already beginning to wonder whether *Modern Painters* would ever be resumed and finished, saw in this new departure a fresh danger of dissipation of energies. In his replies to such remonstrances, Ruskin tried to reassure his parents on all points:—

"(*August* 18.)—I do not mean at *any* time to take up the trade of a lecturer; all my real efforts will be made in writing, and all that I intend to do is merely, as if in conversation, to say to these people, who are ready to listen to me, some of the simple truths about architecture and painting which may perhaps be better put in conversational than literary form. I shall, however, write the lectures first that I may be sure of what I have to say, and send them you to look over."

"(*August* 19.) . . . I cannot now get off without a great fuss, as I have sent a synopsis of the four lectures to be regularly printed with the others published at the commencement of the season. I rather liked the idea of giving my first lecture in your native city: and therefore met the request more immediately and unhesitatingly than I should have done had it come from any other quarter: besides that, I have many friends and admirers in Edinburgh, and am in some respects far better understood there than in London. The Edinburgh artists—Harvey, D. O. Hill,[1] Noel Paton, etc., are all eager to meet me, while the London ones are all too happy to get

[1] Sir George Harvey (1806–1876), an original member and afterwards President of the Royal Scottish Academy; David Octavius Hill (1802–1870), landscape and portrait painter, secretary to the Scottish Society of Arts.

out of my way, and the only letter you have yet got, showing true appreciation of my book, except George Richmond's, is from the Edinburgh Dr. Brown. If I succeed *at all*, I shall do my cause more *immediate* good than by twenty volumes (although I consider that for ultimate purposes writing is best); and I cannot fail altogether because I shall assuredly have plenty to say, and shall say it in a gentlemanly way, if not fluently. I have given plenty of lectures with only one or two people to listen to me, and I don't see why it should be a great condescension to spend the same words on the cleverest people in Edinburgh. . . .

"(*October* 2.)—The lectures have not delayed *Modern Painters*, as I did not intend to write any more till I had a rest. The lectures have been quite by the way. I will promise you the first chapter of *Modern Painters* as a New Year's gift, if I remain in good health."

Having decided, then, to give the lectures, Ruskin occupied himself at Glenfinlas in preparing both the discourses themselves and the drawings with which he meant to illustrate them. He went over some of the ground with Millais, who took up the subject of architecture with avidity. He had already mastered *The Stones of Venice*. "If you have leisure to read," he wrote to Mr. Combe, "get Ruskin's two last volumes, which surpass all he has written." In a later letter he says:—

"Ruskin and myself are pitching into architecture; you will hear shortly to what purpose. I think now I was intended for a Master Mason. All this day I have been working at a window, which I hope you will see carried out very shortly in stone. In my evening hours I mean to make many designs for church and other architecture, as I find myself quite familiar with constructions, Ruskin having given me lessons regarding foundations and the building of cathedrals, etc., etc. This is no loss of time—rather a real relaxation from everyday painting—and it is immensely necessary that something new and good should be done in the place of the old ornamentations. . . . Do, if you can, come and hear Ruskin's lectures."

Ruskin, it will thus be seen, had made a convert by his lectures before they were delivered; and one catches in

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Millais's words a reflection of that spirit of eager zeal and fervid enthusiasm of which Ruskin when he lectured seemed, in later years at any rate, a living embodiment. Millais's help, however, was not limited to the rôle of sympathetic listener at rehearsals. "We are busy making drawings for the lectures," he writes in a later letter; the artist's drawing of a tiger, which was shown at the first lecture, was given as the frontispiece to the original edition of the lectures.

The lectures were fixed for the beginning of November, and on October 26 the Ruskins left Glenfinlas. They paid a visit on the way to William Stirling (afterwards Sir William Stirling-Maxwell), the historian of the artists of Spain, at Keir, reaching Edinburgh—"arrived safe," Ruskin writes, "diagrams and all"—on October 29. The first of the four lectures—that on Domestic Architecture—was delivered on the evening of November 1. Friends and admirers had travelled to Edinburgh to hear and see the author of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*. His father and mother, however—either as still disapproving, or from nervousness—had remained at home, and Ruskin's letters to them give full accounts of it all:—

"*Wednesday morning* [2 *Nov.*, 1853].—Everything went off capitally, and I was heard very well without any exertion. I found myself quite at my ease, and that people thought so, and they are all very much pleased."

"*Wednesday evening.*—Dr. Guthrie, Sir W. and Lady Trevelyan, and Mr. Jameson, formed our dinner party to-day. Dr. Guthrie just as delightful out of pulpit as in it—a Scottish Mr. Melvill; much interesting conversation about ragged schools. He paid me many most kind compliments on my lecture, but begged me to give them a passage or two of the highly worked kind, so I must write a little bit for them. I find them all so inclined to hear what I have to say that I must really work up the lectures to a little higher mark, and am going to bed to meditate over a passage or two. Guthrie asked me to tell him whether I worked up my writing or not; I told him, of course, the truth in a moment, that whenever I thought a piece worth working out, I wrote it over four or five times. He said 'he was *sure* of it, but as people had disputed it with him he wanted to

have it from my own mouth; that Macaulay did the same, and that, in fact, it *couldn't* be done in any other way.' . . ."

A contemporary critique of the lectures gives an account of the lecturer's appearance and manner:—

"The door by the side of the platform opens, and a thin gentleman with light hair, a stiff white cravat, dark overcoat with velvet collar, walking, too, with a slight stoop, goes up to the desk, and looking round with a self-possessed and somewhat formal air, proceeds to take off his great-coat, revealing thereby, in addition to the orthodox white cravat, the most orthodox of white waistcoats. . . . 'Dark hair, pale face, and massive marble brow—that is my ideal of Mr. Ruskin,' said a young lady near us. This proved to be quite a fancy portrait, as unlike the reality as could well be imagined. Mr. Ruskin has light sand-coloured hair; his face is more red than pale; the mouth well cut, with a good deal of decision in its curve, though somewhat wanting in sustained dignity and strength; an aquiline nose; his forehead by no means broad or massive, but the brows full and well bound together; the eye we could not see in consequence of the shadows that fell upon his countenance from the lights overhead, but we are sure it must be soft and luminous, and that the poetry and passion we looked for almost in vain in other features are concentrated there. . . .

"And now for the style of the lecture, you say; what was it? Properly speaking, there were in the lectures two styles essentially distinct, and not well blended,—a speaking and a writing style; the former colloquial and spoken off-hand; the latter rhetorical and carefully read in quite a different voice—we had almost said intoned. When speaking of the sketches on the wall, or employing local illustrations,—such as the buildings of the city,—he talked in an apt, easy, and often humorous manner; but in treating the general relations of the subject, he had recourse to the manuscript leaves on the desk, written in a totally different style, and, naturally enough, read in a very different tone of voice. The effect of this transition was often strange; the audience, too, evidently sometimes had a difficulty in following the rapid change, and did not always keep up with the movement. It would on all accounts have been better had one style been observed throughout. This was plainly seen in

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the lectures on Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites, which were almost entirely read, and certainly had far more unity and compactness than either of the previous ones. Mr. Ruskin's elocution is peculiar; he has a difficulty in sounding the letter 'r'; but it is not this we now refer to, it is to the peculiar tone in the rising and falling of his voice at measured intervals, in a way scarcely ever heard except in the public lection of the service appointed to be read in churches." . . . (*Edinburgh Guardian*, November 19, 1853.)

One gathers from this description that Ruskin did not attain at the first attempt the freedom and mastery which he afterwards displayed in the lecture-room; but those who have heard his later lectures will recognise some familiar traits. The contrast, of which the reporter seems to complain, between more rhetorical and more familiar parts of the lecture, was maintained by Ruskin in most of his Oxford discourses. In the lecture-room, again, he cultivated and developed the manner which the reporter well describes as, "apt, easy, and often humorous." In the preparation and display of his diagrams and drawings Ruskin was often studious of humorous effect. When he published the Edinburgh lectures, two of the plates were furnished with covering flaps, so that the reader might in each case examine the figure at the top before seeing the one at the bottom. Ruskin adopted some similar device when showing the original illustrations, and the humorous effect of incongruity was thus enhanced.

The description of his lectures, just cited, appeared at the conclusion of the course; we must return to Ruskin's letters for particulars of them. The second lecture (Nov. 4) was equally successful:—

"(*November* 5.)—I got on capitally again last night; at least everybody says so. I was not so well satisfied myself, for the lecture was longer, and I had not a thorough command of it, and had to read a good deal; and I had a sense of *sham* in speaking the fine bits learned off by heart, which kept me from being at ease. The odd thing is that everybody tells me I seemed more at ease than in my first lecture, and spoke far better. The lobbies were filled with people standing."

The old people at home thirsted, however, for further and more detailed accounts:— CHAP. XVI.

"EDINBURGH, *Sunday, 6th November*. . . . I should have given you more explicit accounts of time of lectures, etc., had I considered the thing of any importance. . . . When, however, I heard that Lady Trevelyan and others of my friends were coming hundreds of miles to hear me, and found how much importance the Edinburgh people attached to the thing themselves, I saw that I must do more than I at first intended; and now when I find that I have to address a thousand people each night, besides crowded passagefulls, just as if I were Mr. Melvill himself, there is nothing for it but doing as well as I possibly can; and, as I explained to you before, it has forced me to write you such miserable letters, wanting all the *quiet* time I ever get for retouching."

"*Thursday evening, 17th November*. . . . I don't think they are generally of opinion here that I am a *gentle* lecturer or a *cloudy* one. They think me rather *violent* and *clear*, more of the mountain stream than of the mist. Lady Trevelyan says everybody was alike delighted with the last, and that she heard a man whose time was very valuable, muttering, near here, at being obliged to wait for an hour in order to get a place, but saying afterwards that he would have waited *two* hours rather than have missed it."

Even yet his parents were not satisfied. He had told them what he said, how he said it, and how he was received; he had not mentioned how he was dressed:—

"My dress at lectures," wrote Ruskin to his father (Dec. 1), "was my usual dinner dress, just what you and my mother like me best in; coat by Stulz.[1] It only produced *an effect* here, because their lecturers seem usually to address them, and they come to hear, in frock coats and dirty boots."

Ruskin seems to have been much lionised on the occasion of this visit to Edinburgh (during which he lodged in Albyn Place), and in a letter (November 27) to his father, he gives a long list of the various people, small and great, who had paid him attention and whose calls or other

[1] Stulz is named as the typical tailor in Carlyle's *Past and Present*, book iii. ch. xiii.

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civilities he had been backward in returning. In most cases the names are accompanied by little character-sketches —sometimes caustic but never ill-humoured—of most of the leaders of Edinburgh society in that day, including Lord Cockburn, Hugh Miller (the geologist), Sir George and Lady Home, Mr. Dennistoun (author of *The Dukes of Urbino*), and Sir William Hamilton. The friends made on this occasion whom he most valued were Dr. John Brown— "called by his friends the 'beloved physician'—and Professor John Stuart Blackie." Here is Ruskin's first impression of the latter:—

"Professor and Mrs. Blackie. Professor very funny, very clever; wife very nice, a great admirer of mine; Professor (of Greek) a great adversary, but all above board; has been ill. I have had to inquire for, and contend with him. I have quarrelled him well again."

The more he saw of the Professor the more he liked him:—

"(*December* 4.) . . . I have made some agreeable and valuable friends, most especially Professor Blackie, a thoroughly original, daring, enthusiastic, amiable, eccentric, masterly fellow. . . . He has taught me more Greek in an hour than I learnt at Oxford in six months, having studied the *living* language. I am in a great state of delight at knowing for the first time in my life that it is a living one. The Professor gave me to-day a Greek *newspaper*, about a week old, printed at Athens, and in good old Attic Greek hardly differing in a syllable from the language of Alcibiades, except in its subject-matter."

III

After leaving Edinburgh Ruskin went on some visits, including one to Hamilton, where the Duke had invited him to see the manuscripts. Ruskin in his diary noted some of the most beautiful of them, and made drawings from them. How highly he valued the collection was to appear thirty years later when the manuscripts came into the market. He then issued an appeal for funds in the hope of securing some of them for public collections.[1] On returning to London,

[1] See *General Statement Explaining the Nature of and Purpose of St. George's Guild*, dated February 21, 1882.

Ruskin entered at the British Museum upon a systematic study of the illuminated manuscripts in that opulent collection; on his visits to the Museum (1853–54) he was often accompanied by Millais. Page after page in his diaries contains notes upon the MSS. The notes are hardly intelligible or significant to any one else, but it is at any rate possible, and it is interesting, to follow his method of study. He went all through the collection, noting dates and styles. Then he threw them into groups, according to subjects or styles or arrangements of colours. He made careful notes on the manuscripts in his own possession, indexing their initial letters and subjects. The studies thus indicated in his diaries were often utilised for incidental illustration in his books.

The intense delight which Ruskin experienced in these "fairy cathedrals" was attended, however, by some qualms of conscience. The artistic and the moral sides of his nature were then often at strife, and it was only gradually that a reconciliation was reached. The mood is seen very clearly in some letters to his father:—

"*Sunday*, 23*rd* [*October*, 1853]. . . . My love of art has been a terrible temptation to me, and I feel that I have been sadly self-indulgent lately—what with casts, *Liber Studiorum*, missals, and Tintorets. I think I must cut the whole passion short off at the root, or I shall get to be a mere collector, like old Mr. Wells of Redleaf,[1] or Sir W. Scott, or worst of all Beckford or Horace Walpole. I am sure I ought to take that text to heart, 'covetousness which is idolatry,' for I do idolize my Turners and missals, and I can't conceive anybody being ever tried with a heavier temptation than I am to save every farthing I can to collect a rich shelf of thirteenth-century manuscripts. There would be no stop to it, for I should always find the new ones illustrating all the rest. I believe I shall have to give up all idea of farther collection, and to rest satisfied with my treasures."

[1] Mr. Wells, of Redleaf, Penshurst, for many years a sea-captain in the East India Company's service, formed a large collection of modern works of art. Notices of him may be found in many books of artists' reminiscences; see, *e.g.*, Frith's *Autobiography*, i. 319, and J. C. Horsley's *Recollections of a Royal Academician*, p. 55.

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Later letters confirm these good resolutions, if such they were, and one of them is further interesting as premonitory of feelings which were soon to grow in intensity:—

"*Wednesday morning*, 16*th Nov.* . . . My next birthday is the keystone of my arch of life—my 35th—and up to this time I cannot say that I have in any way 'taken up my cross' or 'denied myself'; neither have I visited the poor nor fed them, but have spent my money and time on my own pleasure or instruction. I find I cannot be easy in doing this any more, for I feel that. if I were to die at present, God might most justly say to me, 'Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.' I find myself always doing what I like, and that is certainly not the way to heaven. I feel no call to part with anything that I have, but I am going to preach some most *severe* doctrines in my next book, and I *must* act up to them in not going on spending in works of art."

The letter goes on to propound a scheme for ending and revising his collection, but a little loophole is allowed; "I won't make a vow that if, by any chance, I should hear of some exquisite thirteenth-century work being in the market, I may not consider whether I should be justified in buying it to take care of it." The chance was soon to occur, and the temptation (or opportunity) was not allowed to pass. In his diary for 1854 is the following entry:—

"*February* 26.—On Friday the 24th I got the greatest treasure I have yet obtained in all my life—St. Louis's Psalter."

The exquisite Psalter so named by Ruskin was an unfailing delight to him, and many references to it occur in his books.[1]

Whatever Ruskin possessed, he desired to share. This desire, and the free scope he gave to it, saved him effectually from "getting to be a mere collector." His books, he used to say, were "for use and not for curiosities." He treated them in a way which can hardly be recommended for general practice. He annotated some of his most valuable

[1] This Psalter and Hours of Isabella of France is now in the library of Mr. Henry Yates Thompson, who has printed an illustrated monograph upon it.

manuscripts not merely in pencil, but in ink. He cut them to pieces, re-arranged them to his own desire, and of the "St. Louis's Psalter" he dispersed many of the pages. Some were given to his school at Oxford; others found their way to the Bodleian Library; and others were given to his friend Professor Norton. Some entries in his diary may well cause "a mere collector" to despair:—"*Dec.* 30, 1853.—Cut out some leaves from large missal." "*Jan.* 1, *Sunday*.—Put two pages of missal in frames." "*Jan.* 3.—Cut missal up in evening; hard work." Dean Kitchin relates an anecdote in this connexion: "One day at Brantwood, I was looking through these lovely specimens of monastic skill, and finding the St. Louis missal in complete disorder, I turned to Mr. Ruskin, who was sitting in his wonted chair in his library, and said, 'This MS. is in an awful state; could you not do something to get the pages right again?' and he replied, with a sad smile, 'Oh yes; these old books have in them an evil spirit, which is always throwing them into disorder'—as if it were through envy against anything so beautiful: the fact was that he had played the 'evil spirit' with them himself."[1] But his ripping up of such treasures was at any rate done, as Mr. Collingwood observes,[2] "not for wanton mischief, or in vulgar carelessness, but to show to his classes at lectures," or to give to friends of that which he valued most. Other valuables he treated in the same way, and sometimes, it must be admitted, with less praiseworthy reason. If a book would not fit a particular shelf, he had no compunction in sending for a tool and chopping not the shelf, but the book. Several of the books in his library received this summary execution.

IV

Ruskin returned home, to Herne Hill, at the end of the year, resumed his sittings to Millais, and prepared the Edinburgh lectures for publication. Though these *Lectures*

[1] *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies*, 1904.

[2] *Ruskin Relics*, 1903, p. 184.

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on Architecture and Painting broke no new ground—being rather a re-statement, on a smaller scale and in a more popular and direct form, of the leading ideas and doctrines contained in his previous books—the revision of them for the press involved a good deal of hard work. The book, which appeared in April 1854, was widely noticed in the press; and at the same time Ruskin's private affairs were much canvassed in literary and artistic circles. For in the same month his wife left him. She returned to her parents and immediately instituted a suit. Ruskin declined to put in any answer, and went abroad. The marriage was annulled on July 15, and a year later, on July 3, 1855, Euphemia Chalmers Gray was married at Bowerswell to Millais.

CHAPTER XVII

MODERN PAINTERS CONTINUED

(1854–1856)

"Where is Thy favour'd haunt, eternal Voice,
The region of thy choice,
Where, undisturb'd by sin and earth, the soul
Owns Thine entire control?—
'Tis on the mountain's summit dark and high,
When storms are hurrying by:
'Tis mid the strong foundations of the earth,
Where torrents have their birth."—*The Christian Year.*

I

"THERE is a great deal of talking about the Ruskins here at present," wrote Mrs. Carlyle in May 1854, "and the separation is understood to be permanent." "I know nothing about it," she added; which did not, however, prevent her, any more than it has ever prevented any other lively gossip in like case, from having much to say about it; and in the same letter she aimed a pointed shaft at both parties to the case. I do not propose to engage in the chatter. The marriage in many respects had not been happy on either side, and the last chapter sufficiently indicates how the end of it came about. The event was an incident, rather than a crisis, and a vexation, more than an abiding grief, in Ruskin's life. "I have had many deep sorrows," he said once to a friend, "but this was not one of them." He was speaking after a lapse of many years, but his letters and diaries of the time tell the same tale. Mr. Hall Caine had a story from Rossetti which illustrates Ruskin's dispassionate separation of personal feelings from artistic interest. His father had threatened to put a penknife through the portrait of his son by

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Millais; whereupon Ruskin smuggled it into a cab and carried it off, for safe custody, to Rossetti's studio. The famous picture became the property of Sir Henry Acland. The true romance, and the love-tragedy, of Ruskin's life were yet to come. The routine was not yet to be changed. A letter to a friend shows the face which he meant to present to the world:—

(*To* F. J. Furnivall.) "*Monday evening* (*April* 24).—Many and sincere thanks for your kind note. You can be of no use to me at present, except by not disturbing me, nor thinking hardly of me, yourself. You cannot contradict reports; the world must for the present have its full swing. Do not vex yourself about it, as far as you are sorry, lest such powers as I may have should be shortened. Be assured I shall neither be subdued, nor materially changed, by this matter. The worst of it for *me* has long been passed. If you should hear me spoken ill of, ask people to wait a little. If they will not wait, comfort yourself by thinking that time and tide will not wait either.

"Your letter has been a great pleasure to me. I shall not probably be able to see you before I leave town, but I will write to you from abroad and let you know as soon as I return. I cannot be very long away. I shall always, of course, be grateful for a letter from you. Send it to Denmark Hill with 'to be forwarded' on it. It gave me great delight to know that you and your friends enjoyed yourselves here the other day. So did I heartily."

II

Before the domestic crisis had occurred, Ruskin had already planned a visit to Switzerland, in order to continue his studies for the remaining volumes of *Modern Painters*. The plan was carried out, but in the company of his parents, as in the earlier days, and he was on the Continent from the beginning of May to the end of September. The moment he was in sight of Calais—the port of entry to his Alpine paradise—the studies for *Modern Painters* were resumed. It was on the steam-packet that he made the study of its jib which is engraved in *Præterita*, noting,

in his diary, the beauty of its curves; and this too was the last of his approaches to Calais before he wrote his "glorious thing," as Rossetti called it,[1] on the old tower with which the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* opens. On the road from Calais to Amiens he notes the beauty of the tree-scenery, and this also was the foundation of a passage in the third volume. A passage from his diary at Amiens, describing a walk "among the branching currents of the Somme," was given in the fourth volume. Then he revisited some of his favourite cathedrals, afterwards making his way, by Champagnole as always, to Geneva. At Vevay they stopped some days, and here he was already at work on *Modern Painters*. "I am writing," he says in the first chapter of the third volume, "at a window which commands a view of the head of the Lake of Geneva," and it was there that he penned his definition of poetry—"the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions"; to which he afterwards made the necessary addition, "in musical form." From Vevay he proceeded through the Simmenthal to Thun. The Simmenthal and the country about Fribourg inspired a passage in the fourth volume. Beautiful in itself, it exerts, he says, an added charm as containing "far-away promise" of scenery yet greater and more impressive, and is thus peculiarly calculated to excite "the expectant imagination." Something of the same idea was expressed by a later poet in describing the same scenery:—

> "Far off the old snows ever new
> With silver edges cleft the blue
> Aloft, alone, divine;
> The sunny meadows silent slept,
> Silence the sombre armies kept,
> The vanguard of the pine."[2]

At Fribourg he spent some time in sketching its walls and towers, for another of his purposes on this foreign tour was to study Swiss history, and in connexion therewith

[1] *D. G. Rossetti's Letters to William Allingham*, p. 181.

[2] F. W. H. Myers: "Simmenthal."

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"to engrave a series of drawings of the following Swiss towns: Geneva, Fribourg, Basle, Thun, Baden, and Schaffhausen." This work was never completed, but many such drawings were made. Next, Ruskin spent two or three weeks in the Bernese Oberland, and at Lucerne. Some of his sketches there were utilised to illustrate "The Law of Evanescence" in the fourth volume. His diary at this time shows once more the spirit of religious solemnity in which he approached his task. He was "Nature's Priest," appointed by a direct call to testify to the Divinity of Nature and of Truth; a steward of the mysteries, bound in duty and in gratitude to reveal the holiness and the beauty which he was privileged to see:—

"*June* 24.—My father called me at half-past four this morning at Interlachen. I was out as the clock struck five, and climbed as steadily as I could among the woods north of the valley, for an hour and a half, then emerging on the pure green pasture of the upper mountains. The Jungfrau and two Eigers were clear and soft in the intense mountain light; a field of silver cloud filled the valley above the lake of Brienz; the eastern hills fused in mist, splendid in the white warmth of morning. I stood long, praying that these happy hours and holy sights might be of more use to me than they have been, and might be remembered by me in hours of temptation or mortification.

"Lucerne, *July* 2, 1854.—Third Sunday after Trinity. I hope to keep this day a festival for ever, having received my third call from God,[1] in answer to much distressful prayer. May He give grace, to walk hereafter with Him in newness of life, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

In the same spirit is his first entry on finding himself once more in his happy valley:—

"Chamouni, *July* 10.—Thank God, here once more, and feeling it more deeply than ever. I have been up to my stone upon the Breven, all unchanged and happy. It is curious that the first book I took up here, after my New Testament, was the *Christian*

[1] For Ruskin's first call, see p. 120 or p. 127; for a second, p. 179 or p. 186 or pp. 188–9.

Year, and it opened at the poem for the 20th Sunday after Trinity, which I had never read before. CHAP. XVII.

"18*th July*.—Every day here I seem to see further into nature, and into myself—and into futurity."

It was amid such scenes—and "such sounds as make deep silence in the heart, For Thought to do her part"—that, during a busy and happy fortnight at Chamouni, Ruskin revived the impressions and completed the studies which informed the greater portion of his fourth volume. It was during this visit to Chamouni that he made, in particular, the experiments in light which are explained in its third chapter; and "weighed the minute-burden of sand in the streams."[1] His diary shows also that he was very busy in collecting and studying the Alpine flowers. It is significant of the mood in which these studies were made that the portions of the Bible now selected for his daily annotation were the Beatitudes and the Revelation. Another entry in the diary shows the peace and health which he found in these pursuits:—

"Sallenches, 13*th August*.—How little I thought God would bring me here again just now; and I am here, stronger in health, higher in hope, deeper in peace, than I have been for years. The green pastures and pine forests of the Varens softly seen through the light of my window. I cannot be thankful enough, nor happy enough. Psalm lxvi. 8–20."

From the "Mountain Glory" Ruskin passed to the "Mountain Gloom." It was at Sion, as appears from a long entry in his diary for September 5, 1854, that he made the notes afterwards expanded in the nineteenth chapter of the fourth volume. He was now on his way home, and after spending a day or two in Paris to make some further studies in the Louvre, reached Dover on October 2. The contrast between the primness of England and the picturesqueness of the Continent struck him once more very strongly:—

"Reading, *October* 11.—There is one thing very noticeable in England as compared with France. In France one never sees such

[1] *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii., Epilogue; the reference being to the observations recorded in *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. ch. xii.

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an inscription as 'To let, a Genteel house up this road.' There is no gentility in France. One sees 'Une belle maison,' 'Une jolie chambre commode,' 'propre,' but never anything corresponding to our 'genteel.' I think they try to rise in France; but not to appear to have risen. They have ambition, not pretension. Neither is there anything, in the small cottage dwellings, of nomenclature such as with us—'Balmoral Cottage,' 'Saxe-Coburg'—Villas, etc., to places ten feet square. The French have a gloomy dignity quite beyond this—a self-assertion probably in truth founded on a greater pride and selfishness. . . ."

And so forth; the reader of *Modern Painters* will already have recognised here the notes for the opening passages in the fourth volume.

It will be seen that by the time Ruskin reached home, his mind, his note-books, and his sketch-books were filled with materials for the continuation of that book; but he had a long row to hoe before the materials could be planted in their proper places, and everything be fitted into a connected scheme. This writing of the third and fourth volumes took him from fifteen to eighteen months—by no means a long time considering their bulk, the care with which he always composed, and the fifty plates with which the volumes were illustrated. But now, as always, he had many other interests and some diversions. These are touched upon in a letter written as he was nearing home:—

(*To* Lady Trevelyan.) "Paris, *Sept.* 24, '54.—I received your letter two days ago at Sens, and we are all most truly sorry for Sir Walter, and for you. Poor Sir Walter has indeed had much to suffer—first in his anxiety about your health, and then when you were getting better these bitter sorrows striking him again and again, like the Northumberland rain beating on his bare forehead as we crossed the moor. You are both of you good people, and I think that must be the reason you have so much to suffer—you would have been *too* happy, but for such things as these. Men *must* have sorrow in this world, and it takes *hard* blows to make them sorrowful when they are good. . . . I have got over my distress and darkness now, thank God, and I am very full of plans, and promises, and hopes, and shall have much to talk to

you about when I see you, though I do not think I shall be able to come north this autumn now. . . . I am rolling projects over and over in my head. I want to give short lectures to about 200 at once in turn, of the sign painters, and shop decorators, and writing masters, and upholsterers, and masons, and brickmakers, and glass-blowers, and pottery people, and young artists, and young men in general, and school-masters, and young ladies in general, and school-mistresses; and I want to teach Illumination to the sign painters and the younger ladies; and to have prayer books all *written* again (only the Liturgy altered first, as I told you), and I want to explode printing, and gunpowder—the two great curses of the age; I begin to think that abominable art of printing is the root of all the mischief—it makes people used to have everything the same shape. And I mean to lend out *Liber Studiorums* and Albert Dürers to everybody who wants them; and to make copies of all fine thirteenth-century manuscripts, and lend *them* out—all for nothing, of course; and to have a room where anybody can go in all day and always see *nothing* in it but what is *good*, with a little printed explanatory catalogue saying *why* it is good; and I want to have a black hole, where they shall see nothing but what is bad, filled with Claudes, and Sir Charles Barry's architecture, and so on; and I want to have a little Academy of my own in all the manufacturing towns, and to get the young artists—Pre-Raphaelite always—to help me; and I want to have an Academy exhibition, an opposition shop, where all the pictures shall be hung on the line—in nice little rooms decorated in a Giottesque manner—and no bad pictures let in, and none good turned out, and very few altogether—and only a certain number of people let in each day, by ticket, so as to have no elbowing. And as all this is merely by the way, while I go on with my usual work about Turner, and collect materials for a great work I mean to write on politics—founded on the thirteenth century—I shall have plenty to do when I get home. . . ."

He had, indeed, as will be seen in the following chapters; but before describing in detail the multifarious interests which divided his attention during the continuation of *Modern Painters*, it will be convenient to give a short summary of his work from 1854 to 1856, and to say

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something of the third and fourth volumes, which were both published in the latter year. On his return from the Continent in October 1854, he took up a drawing-class at the Working Men's College (Chap. XIX.). In the spring of 1855 he put out the first of a series of annual *Academy Notes* (Chap. XX.). This work, continued with steady application to *Modern Painters*, taxed his strength severely, as he summarily notes in *Præterita*:—

> "I get cough which lasts for two months, till I go down to Tunbridge Wells, to my doctor cousin, William Richardson, who puts me to bed, gives me some syrup, cures me in three days, and calls me a fool for not coming to him before, with some rather angry warnings that I had better not keep a cough for two months again."

He went also to Deal, and there made the studies of shipping presently to be used in his preface to Turner's *Harbours of England*. Returning to Denmark Hill, he devoted the winter (1855–56) to *Modern Painters*. The third volume was published in January 1856; the fourth, in April; and the *Harbours*, in May.

III

The structure of a book thus resumed after an interval of ten years—and ten years, be it remembered, which had seen the author pass almost from boyhood to manhood—naturally showed differences and developments. Naturally, too, the later part of the book was not at all what the author had intended. To begin with, the conclusion of the book was to have been one volume;[1] it became three. Again, in resuming his book, Ruskin adopted a less systematic method. He discarded the elaborate synopsis of contents, and did not force his chapters into a rigidly consecutive scheme. He had begun, as he says in the third volume, to distrust systems and system-mongers.

The fact is that though there is throughout *Modern Painters* an underlying unity of purpose and consistency

[1] See *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. ch. vi. § 62.

of thought, yet if it is to be understood aright, it must be regarded as five different books, the division into which does not entirely correspond either with the division into volumes or with the framework mapped out at the beginning of the book. (1) The First Volume is a defence of Turner, against the charge that his later pictures were "unnatural." This volume was, as Ruskin says,[1] the expansion of a magazine article, and was written in all the heat and haste of youthful enthusiasm. (2) Then came a pause, during which the author's principal study was among the early Italian painters and Tintoretto. Both alike commanded his passionate admiration. The Second Volume thus became in part a hymn of praise, inspired by the religious ideal of Giotto and his circle; and in part an essay upon the Imagination, inspired by Tintoret's works in the Scuola di San Rocco. (3) Ten years now intervened—years of widened and deepened study in many directions. The earlier chapters of the Third Volume are an interlude, necessary in order to establish a harmony between what had preceded and what was to follow. (4) The Fourth Volume and the first two Parts of the Fifth (Parts vi. and vii., in the arrangement of the whole book) are an essay on the Beauty of Mountains, Trees, and Clouds; while, lastly, (5) the remainder of that final volume, written four years later,[2] is a treatise on "the relations of Art to God and man."

We are concerned here, first, with what I have called the interlude. In looking back over his first two volumes, and forward to what he had yet to say, Ruskin was struck with obvious difficulties and apparent contradictions. He had started with defining the greatest art as that which contained the greatest ideas; he had thus insisted on the spiritual side of art. Then he had turned to his defence of Turner; and there, owing to the nature of the attacks he had to meet, his principal object was to prove that Turner had given more material and actual

[1] Preface to *Modern Painters*, vol. v.

[2] It is probable that Parts vi. and vii. were written, at any rate in the first draft, at about the same time as the Fourth Volume, but were held over, owing to the bulk of that volume.

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truth than other painters. Then why did not his pictures convey the same impression of truth to ordinary spectators? But, again, in his second volume, he had been led to praise in terms hardly less enthusiastic than those applied to Turner, the frescoes of the Italian "primitives," so naïve, so limited in imitative resources, though representing so beautifully a religious ideal. Then what are the true limits of idealism in art? Sometimes, in defending Turner, Ruskin seemed to be pleading for idealism as against the material imitation of the Dutch painters; at other times, to be pleading for realism as against the ideal compositions of the school of Claude. He perceived the difficulties which all this presents to careless readers, and the appearance of contradiction to which it exposed him. And yet, once more: since the second volume of *Modern Painters* appeared, Ruskin had been prominently before the public as the champion of the Pre-Raphaelites, whose early work was distinguished among other characteristics by its elaborate finish and minuteness of detail. The critics with one consent fell upon Ruskin for his inconsistency in admiring at once the closely manipulated foregrounds of Millais in his early works and the misty distances of Turner. What, then, was it, in final analysis, in which the greatness of Turner consisted—in truths that he recorded, or in visions that he invented? Was it the material, numberable beauties of nature that he puts before us, or was he great for adding

> "the gleam,
> The light that never was on land or sea,
> The consecration and the poet's dream"?

It was to resolve such questions, to clear up these ambiguities, that was Ruskin's first object in resuming *Modern Painters*. The reader will observe throughout the earlier chapters of the third volume a recurring refrain of allusion to hostile criticisms and apparent contradictions. To some extent Ruskin, as we have already seen, never sought to deny the existence of self-contradictions in his work. His principal book was written at intervals during seventeen years; he was twenty-four when he began it, and

forty-one when he ended it, and he had been learning all the time. And, again, though Truth is one, yet since Error is various, the statements of the truth must be as many-sided as the faults which it has to correct. Ruskin illustrates this thought in his diary of 1849 from his supreme arbiter—the text of the Bible:—

"It will be found that throughout the Scriptures there are on every subject two opposite groups of texts; and a middle group, which contains the truth that rests between the two others. The opposite texts are guards against the abuse of the central texts—guards set in opposite directions; and if these guards are considered as themselves containing the truth, instead of being a mere fence against some form of error, all manner of falsehood may be supported in scriptural language. But on the other hand, this complicated structure, while it betrays the careless, rewards the faithful reader; and when it is fully understood presents a form of security against error such as could not in any otherwise have been attained (like the Mont Blanc set between opponent fan-shaped strata)—a security which every thoughtful and earnest reader has felt. For instance, 'Rejoice evermore' and 'Blessed are they that mourn' are two guarding and contradictory texts; and the truth they guard is the central text 'But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.'"

Fortified by these reflections, Ruskin often gloried in the charge that he was apt to contradict himself. "I shall endeavour for the future," he writes, "to put my self-contradictions in short sentences and direct terms, in order to save sagacious persons the trouble of looking for them."[1] It is possible by taking passages from their context, and isolating them from the statements to which they are severally opposed, to represent Ruskin in turn as preaching distinctness and indistinctness in art, finish and incompleteness, idealism and realism, minuteness and breadth. But, having in the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* stated at different places different sides of the polygon of truth as he conceived it, he now set himself in the third volume to define his central position on many of the vexed questions which have been indicated above. The book

[1] *Two Paths*, § 86 *n.*

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exhibits many "oscillations of temper" and "progressions of discovery"; but "in the main aim and principle," he says, "there is no variation from its first syllable to its last. It declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God; and tests all work of man by concurrence with, or subjection to that."[1] In the application of this general principle to particular questions, Ruskin's central position may be stated somewhat as follows: That art is the greatest which expresses the greatest number of the noblest ideas. Art is the expression of an artist's soul. A man may have soul and not be able to paint, in which case he ought not to be a painter. But be his manipulation never so perfect, he is not a great artist unless he is also capable of receiving and imparting noble impressions. In the third volume, "nominally treating of 'Many Things,' will be found," says Ruskin himself, "the full expression of what I knew best; namely, that all 'things,' many or few, which we ought to paint, must be first distinguished boldly from the nothings which we ought not."[2] The business of the landscape-painter is to paint his impressions. The noblest impressions derivable from natural scenery are not those which lend themselves most easily to deceptive imitation. The way to receive noble impressions from Nature is first to study her with unquestioning fidelity. Imagination is a form of vision: it is idle and unprofitable unless it is of things seen by the mind's eye as truthfully, as precisely, as much in accordance with ideal truths as if seen by the corporeal eye. Finish in art is relative to the object pursued. It may be wasted on unworthy objects and thrown away on secondary matters; it is never right unless it is the means of giving an additional truth. "There is nothing that can be labelled in any of this," perhaps some one may say; "this body of doctrine is not exactly realism, nor idealism, nor impressionism, and Ruskinism cannot be identified with any of them." That is true, and is perhaps what Ruskin meant when he said that no true disciple of his would ever be a Ruskinian,[3] for

[1] Preface to *Modern Painters*, vol. v.

[2] *The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism* (1878), § 16.

[3] *St. Mark's Rest*, § 209.

what he taught was only what he had learnt from the good and great of many different ages and many diverse schools.

Ruskin himself nowhere states the case so clearly as in some pages which were found among his papers after his death, and which seem to have been intended for an addition to the passage in *The Stones of Venice* where he says "that art is valuable or otherwise, only as it expresses the personality, activity, and living perception of a good and great human soul," and again that "all art is great, good, and true only so far as it is distinctively the work of *manhood* in its entire and highest sense":—

"I believe it has been acutely felt by all men who have ever devoted themselves to the elucidation of abstract truth, that exactly in proportion to the scope, depth, and importance of any given principle was the difficulty of so expressing it as that it should not be capable of misapprehension, and of guarding it against certain forms of associated error. . . . And this I have long felt to be also the case with every great principle of art which it has been my endeavour in this and my other writings to assert or defend. There is not any one but has, as it were, two natures in it—at least two different colours or sides—according to the things in connexion with which it is viewed; and therefore, exactly in proportion to the breadth and universality which I have endeavoured to give to all my statements, is their liability to appearances of contradiction, and the certainty of their being misunderstood by any person who does not take the pains to examine the connexion.

"This is peculiarly the case with respect to the principle now under consideration. . . . It is not only the most important, but it is the head and sum of all others; it is in fact this which, asserted first in the opening chapters of *Modern Painters*, I have been endeavouring in all that I have written subsequently, either in various ways to establish or to show the consequences of, if established. . . .

"In the second chapter of the first volume of *Modern Painters* it was generally alleged that all art was great according to the Greatness of the ideas it conveyed—not according to the perfection of the means adopted for conveying them. The essence of the Art was said to be in the thought—not in the language, and the

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subjects of inquiry laid before the reader were the different kinds of *Ideas* which art could convey. It was assumed, therefore, that all great or, as commonly worded, fine art was essentially *Ideal* or of the Soul, as distinguished from the lower art which is principally of the body—that is, of the hands, limbs, and sight—but not of the soul. There is not a definite separation between the two kinds—a blacksmith may put soul into the making of a horseshoe, and an architect may put none into the building of a church. Only exactly in proportion as the Soul is thrown into it, the art becomes Fine; and not in proportion to any amount of practice, ingenuity, strength, knowledge, or other calculable and saleable excellence thrown into it. This is the one truth which thoroughly to understand and act upon will create a school of art in any kind; and which to misunderstand and deny will for ever render great art impossible. This one truth I have throughout had at my heart—variously struggling and endeavouring to illustrate it—according to the end immediately in view. In the part of *Modern Painters*, just referred to, the kinds of ideas conveyable by art were resolved into three principal classes—ideas of Truth, Beauty, and Relation; and it was my purpose with respect to all three classes to show, that the Truth of greater art was that which the soul apprehended, not the sight merely; that the Beauty of great art was in like manner that which the soul perceived, not the senses merely; that the Thoughts of great art were those which the soul originated, and not the Understanding merely. But because the volume of *Modern Painters* was written in definite defence of a great artist against whom it was alleged by the commonality of critics that the only merit of his work—if it had merit at all—was in its imaginative power, and that there was no truth nor resemblance to Nature in his pictures, I met these persons first upon their own ground, and devoted that first volume to the demonstration that not only Turner *did* paint the material and actual truth of Nature, but that the truth had never in landscape been fully painted by any other man. And in doing this I had to meet two distinct classes of opponents, first and principally those who looked for nothing in art but a literal and painstaking imitation of the externals of Nature, as in the works of the Dutch school, against whom I had to prove that the truths thus sought were but a small part of the truth of Nature, and that there were higher and

more occult kinds of truth which could not be rendered but by some sacrifice of imitative accuracy, and which Turner had by such sacrifice succeeded in rendering for the first time in the history of art. But in the second place and collaterally I had to meet those men who in their love of system or 'composition' disregarded or denied the truth of Nature altogether, and supposed that the Imagination was independent of truth. Against whom I had to assert the dignity and glory of Truth, and its necessity as the foundation of all art whatsoever. . . . As there is an ultimate truth, which only the soul perceives, and there is an ultimate expression, which only the soul employs, very often the most thoughtful and expressive art must be that which is in one sense least like Nature; that is to say, symbolical or comprehensive instead of imitative. To all this kind of expression, in which the true early schools were unrivalled, the modern artist is either utterly dead, or only unconsciously and imperfectly sensitive; and therefore in all I have written it has been necessary for me to meet alternately two forms of opposition just as antagonistic to each other as to truth—one that of the Formalists, who despised Nature, and the other that of the lower and more ignorant Naturalists, who despised symbolism—and therewith the whole range of the magnificent thoughts opened in work of the early ages."

Some of these double-sided principles are discussed in the earlier chapters of the third volume of *Modern Painters;* and in connexion with them should be read, according to the analysis here suggested, the first few chapters of the fourth volume. The purpose of those chapters (i.–v.) is to clear up other difficulties connected with the practice of Turner; marking the proper meaning and sphere of the picturesque; contrasting topographical accuracy with essential truth of impression; explaining Turner's principles of light, and the truths which are revealed in "Turnerian mystery."

IV

The second portion of the third volume (chapter xi. onwards) has a somewhat different purpose, and Ruskin here adopts a different treatment. His method now becomes

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historical, and the subject-matter of the chapters is the History of Landscape as deducible from art and literature—the History, that is, of men's feelings towards natural scenery—a subject which is resumed at the end of the fourth volume, in the chapters on "The Mountain Gloom" and "The Mountain Glory," where Ruskin discusses the influence of mountains on the life and character of peoples. These ten chapters (the last eight of the third, and the last two of the fourth) form, in subject-matter, a separate treatise; they have a most attractive theme, which Ruskin was the first to treat. The subject is a very large one; its proper discussion would require, he says, "knowledge of the entire history of two great ages of the world," and he does not claim for his chapters more than helpfulness in suggestion. At a later time he admitted that the logic of his conclusions had not entirely satisfied himself. What is the cause or nature of love of mountains? If it is all that Ruskin claimed for it, why does it not affect all noble minds alike, and why must the account between Gloom and Glory be so evenly balanced? "The more I analysed," he says, "the less I could either understand or justify," and "the less I felt able to deny the claim of prosaic and ignobly-minded persons to be allowed to like the land level." "In the end," he adds, "I found there was nothing for it but simply to assure those recusant and grovelling persons that they were perfectly wrong, and that nothing could be expected, either in art or literature, from people who liked to live among snipes and widgeons."[1] But if Ruskin's historical and literary sketch of the Influence of Landscape cannot claim to have said the last word on the subject of which it treats, it abounds in suggestive thoughts; it has attracted many inquirers on to the same field, and the title of one of the chapters—"Of the Pathetic Fallacy"—has become a stock phrase in subsequent literary criticism. The analyses of poetry, incidentally contained in this volume, together with those in the second volume, form, indeed, a singularly stimulating and suggestive essay in literary criticism. His particular judgments are indeed open to question;

[1] *The Art of England* (1883), § 174.

what judgments which are individual and genuine are not? Thus Rossetti quarrelled with Ruskin's praise of Longfellow's *Golden Legend*, as also with the extracts from Browning, in the fourth volume. "Really," he wrote, "the omissions in Browning's passage are awful, and the union with Longfellow worse. How I loathe *Wishi-washi*,—of course without reading it."[1] So, again, Matthew Arnold in his Oxford lectures *On Translating Homer* found fault with Ruskin for reading into the *Iliad* more sentiment than in fact exists there. Other critics at the time objected to this or that judgment. Yet Ruskin's sense of the excellent was so keen and so strong, and his analysis of his individual impressions so subtle, that few men can read these chapters without stimulus. "I never read anything," says Sir Leslie Stephen, of Ruskin's analysis of the imaginative faculty, "which seemed to me to do more to make clear the true characteristics of good poetry."[2]

Whether or not Ruskin succeeded in establishing a logical basis for mountain-lovers, he certainly did much to increase their number and supply noble grounds for their love. The chapters on "Mountain Beauty" which occupy the greater part of the fourth volume were the result, as we have seen, of studies and observations carried on during many years; and if, as he somewhere says, the greatest service in art or literature is to see accurately and report faithfully, these records of what he had seen among the mountains must be accounted among the most important portions of his work. This was Ruskin's own opinion. "The subject of the sculpture of mountains into the forms of perpetual beauty which they miraculously receive from God was," he says, "first taken up by me in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, and the elementary principles of it, there stated, form the most valuable and least faultful part of the book."[3] "His power of seeing the phenomena vividly was as remarkable," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "as

[1] *Letters to William Allingham*, p. 181.

[2] *The National Review*, April 1900.

[3] Introduction to W. G. Collingwood's *Limestone Alps of Savoy*, 1884.

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his power, not always shared by scientific writers, of making description interesting. I owe him a personal debt. Many people had tried their hands upon Alpine descriptions since Saussure; but Ruskin's chapters seemed to have the freshness of a new revelation. The fourth volume of *Modern Painters* infected me and other early members of the Alpine Club with an enthusiasm for which, I hope, we are still grateful. Our prophet indeed ridiculed his disciples for treating Mont Blanc as a greased pole. We might well forgive our satirist, for he had revealed a new pleasure which we might mix with ingredients which he did not fully appreciate."[1] The Alpine Club, it should be stated, was not yet in existence, nor had any attempt as yet been made to scale the Matterhorn. Ruskin was not a climber in the Alpine Club's sense of the word, but he knew and loved the mountains as few other men have done, and in one respect at least he was an Alpine pioneer. He was the first to draw the Matterhorn accurately—the first, too, he says, to photograph it,[2] and the plates, no less than the descriptive chapters, in the fourth volume, may well have acted as a revelation and an incitement to the original founders of the Alpine Club—men who, as Sir Leslie Stephen says, had learnt, in part from Ruskin, to find in climbing scientific and artistic interests as well as athletic exercise. Another past President of the Club, Mr. Douglas Freshfield, has borne testimony to Ruskin's services in this respect. Ruskin, he says, "had a faculty of precise observation, the basis of all scientific research, which made him the most formidable of critics to any man of science whose eyesight might be temporarily affected by some preconceived theory. But this appreciation of detail in no way interfered with Ruskin's romantic delight in the whole, in the sentiment and spirit of mountain landscapes. No writer has added so much to our enjoyment of Alpine scenery."[3]

In Ruskin's mind, however, there was a deeper object in view than to arouse interest in Alpine scenery. The

[1] *The National Review*, April 1900.

[2] Introduction to W. G. Collingwood's *Limestone Alps of Savoy*.

[3] *The Alpine Journal*, May 1900, vol. xx. p. 127.

human interest was never long absent from his thoughts when contemplating scenes of natural beauty or grandeur. It was not only that he moralised the mountains. Matthew Arnold says of the nature-poetry of Wordsworth that it enables us, not so much to front "the cloud of mortal destiny," as to "put it by." To Ruskin, the study of nature was, on the other hand, a call to action. It has been suggested above that, from one point of view, the chapters of the fourth volume on "The Mountain Glory" and "The Mountain Gloom" belong to the analysis of landscape-sentiment which is given in the third volume; and that is true, but their actual place was essential in Ruskin's scheme: they contained the practical gist, as he intended it, of his mountain-studies. "All the investigations undertaken by me at this time were connected in my own mind," he says, "with the practical hope of arousing the attention of the Swiss and Italian mountain peasantry to an intelligent administration of the natural treasures of their woods and streams."[1] He formed schemes a few years afterwards for coming himself to live among the Alps, and trying his hand at relieving the Mountain Gloom.[2] And here, in these volumes, he begs his readers, if they condemn the seclusion of the anchorites, to show themselves worthier by seeking inspiration for practical benevolence from the mountain solitudes; he desires to interest them in the hard struggles of the peasant-life, and bids them remember how much might be done by well-devised charity "to fill a whole Alpine valley with happiness."

The attractiveness of his themes, the addition of the illustrations, and the splendour of his style—chastened in these later volumes, and freed from the affectations of the second, assured them an appreciative welcome. He found too, that his words on other subjects were beginning to be listened to. His appendices in *Stones of Venice* and *Modern Painters* on Education attracted far more attention, he says, because part of his architectural and pictorial work, than ever afterwards his exclusively commercial and social

[1] *Deucalion*, ii. ("Revision").

See Vol. II. p. 62.

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analyses.[1] He found interested listeners even in official circles, and a year or two later Royal Commissions and Select Committees called him before them. Meanwhile reviews in the press were numerous, and, on the whole, very complimentary; his increasing popularity brought, on the other hand, some of the heavier organs into the field against him. One attack—that in the *Quarterly Review* for March 1856—is worth mentioning as having called forth in reply one of the few productions of Burne-Jones's pen. This was an article entitled "Ruskin and the *Quarterly*," which he contributed to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* for June 1856, and which represented the joint feelings and views of himself and William Morris.[2] They repudiate with scorn the counter-assertion of the *Quarterly* "that the function of art is not to express thought but to make pretty things," and describe how from the dead-level of criticism given over to worship of the conventional and the merely pretty, "this man John Ruskin rose, seeming to us like a Luther of the arts." An earlier article in the same magazine had referred to Ruskin as "speaking, if ever man spoke, by the spirit and approval of heaven."[3] These books, said George Eliot a little later, of the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters*, "contain, I think, some of the finest writing of the age. He is strongly akin to the sublimest part of Wordsworth."[4] "I gave him my grateful thanks," wrote Edward Thring in after years; "it is a noble book, and did noble work at the time, and will continue to do so. It did what I should have thought impossible: it smashed up for ever the narrow technicalities of artists, and altered the point of view not only for them, but for the whole world, and gave the seeing eye, and thought, and feeling a practical reality which they will never lose but never had before. . . . I am grateful to him for having put me into a new world

[1] See his account of a visit to Lord Palmerston in *Præterita*, iii. § 29.

[2] The article is attributed to Morris in Mr. H. Buxton Forman's *The Books of William Morris* (1897, p. 27); but Mr. Mackail informs me that, while representing the opinions of both Morris and Burne-Jones, it was for the most part written by the latter.

[3] April 1856, pp. 212–225.

[4] *George Eliot's Life*, vol. ii. p. 7.

of observation, beauty, power, and progressive thought which amounted to what I have called it—a new world; and every day adds to the obligation."[1]

The Introductory Essay in *The Harbours of England by Turner and Ruskin*, and the descriptions of the drawings, form a supplementary chapter to *Modern Painters*. The scientific portions of that book were, as Ruskin says,[2] "divided prospectively, in the first volume, into four sections, . . . meant to define the essential forms of sky, earth, water, and vegetation; but finding," he adds, "that I had not the mathematical knowledge required for the analysis of wave-action, the chapters on sea-painting were never finished, the materials for them being partly used in *The Harbours of England*." From this point of view, then, the book was a continuation of the chapters on sea-painting in the first volume of *Modern Painters*. From another point of view, it was a chapter supplementary to the fourth and fifth volumes, for the analysis of the several drawings by Turner illustrates the artist's principles of composition as expounded in *Modern Painters*.

Ruskin's father considered that his son's essay was "an extremely well done thing," and "more likely to be received without cavil than anything he had written." The judgment of competent criticism has endorsed the former opinion, and the reviewers of the day justified the latter. The Introductory Essay, written in the middle of Ruskin's active life, and in the plenitude of his power, has generally been recognised as among his masterpieces. The subject—the treatment of sea and shipping in art—had hitherto been almost untouched, save by Ruskin himself (in the first volume of *Modern Painters*). It was handled with the fulness of illustration and the nicety of analysis characteristic of his best work. The style shows his special powers at their best; it is imaginative without being fanciful, and the language, though rich and luxuriant, is free alike from over-emphasis and from over-elaboration. "No book in our language," says Mr. Frederic Harrison in his essay on "Ruskin as

[1] *Life of Edward Thring*, by G. R. Parkin, 1898, vol. ii. p. 245.

[2] Preface to *In Montibus Sanctis*.

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Master of Prose," "shows more varied resources over prose-writing, or an English more pure, more vigorous, more enchanting." Never, too—at least in prose—had the beauty and mystery of the sea, or the glory of ships and shipping, received expression so rapturous and yet so penetrating as that which Ruskin in this essay pours forth. It compelled admiration in quarters the least favourably predisposed. I have quoted in earlier chapters the tirades of the leading literary journal against Ruskin; let us read here its ungrudging tribute to his *Harbours of England*:—

"Since Byron's 'Address to the Ocean,' a more beautiful poem on the sea has not been written. It is a prose poem worthy of a nation at whose throne the seas, like captive monsters, are chained and bound. It is worthy of the nation of Blake and Nelson, of Drake and Howe, and true island hearts will beat quicker as they read. To first appreciate, and first to enable others to appreciate, some fresh and unheeded beauty of the universe, is a gift second only to that of creation. After this book has been mastered and got by heart—as it will be—the waves that lap and wash our cliffs, that now heap on them rough kisses, and now rush on them like hungry leopards, will speak to Englishmen in a fuller and more articulate voice. A great mind has at last come and almost deciphered the meaning of the surge's moan, and the deep sea's shout of madness. The chemist may still look on the sea as a saline draught, and the cosmographer deem it a thing to fill up maps with; but Mr. Ruskin, with his earnest, meditative wisdom, teaches us to see in the unexhausted theme of poets and painters a beauty as yet untouched and a mystery as insolvable as eternity."[1]

The Harbours of England touches also one of the most characteristic sides of the great English painter's genius, and links inseparably the names of Turner and Ruskin.

[1] *Athenæum*, July 26, 1856.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN A LITERARY WORKSHOP

"I know of no genius but the genius of hard work."
—J. M. W. Turner.

I

"Writing never gave me," says Ruskin, "the kind of pain of which Carlyle so wildly complains,—to my total amazement and boundless puzzlement, be it in passing said; for he talked just as vigorously as he wrote, and the book he makes bitterest moan over, *Friedrich*, bears the outer aspect of richly enjoyed gossip, and lovely involuntary eloquence of description or praise. My own literary work was always done as quietly and methodically as a piece of tapestry. I knew exactly what I had got to say, put the words firmly in their places like so many stitches, hemmed the edges of chapters round with what seemed to me graceful flourishes, touched them finally with my cunningest points of colour, and read the work to papa and mamma at breakfast next morning as a girl shows her sampler."—Such is his account in *Præterita* of the method of his authorship. "It gave me no serious trouble," he adds; "I should think the pleasure of driving, to a good coachman, of ploughing, to a good farmer, much more of dressmaking, to an inventive and benevolent modiste, must be greatly more piquant than the most proudly ardent hours of book-writing have ever been to me." The master of a literary workshop is the first authority upon its methods; but the passage just quoted will suggest, I think, that Ruskin's account is to be taken with some allowance for the note of subtle humour which makes itself heard throughout *Præterita*. There is a distinction, too, to be drawn between the preliminary work

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upon which his books were founded and the later task of putting the materials into shape. The serious reading, the close studies, and much of the thought and emotion which went to the making of his earlier books were done during his sojourns abroad. "It often required," he says, "a week or two's hard walking to determine some geological problem, now dismissed in an unnoticed sentence; and it constantly needed examination and thought, prolonged during many days in a picture gallery, to form opinions which the reader may suppose to be dictated by caprice, and will hear only to dispute."[1] Preceding chapters have told the story of such preliminary studies, and a later chapter will illustrate it further. It is only the final work at home that Ruskin likens to the girl's sampler. And even here it would be a great mistake to suppose that the stitches were put into their places, and the edges hemmed, without expenditure of time, thought, and trouble. Ruskin himself, in many other passages, has told us the contrary. The arrangement, both of his materials and of his sentences, cost him, in fact, infinite labour. Writing of his work upon the later volumes of *Modern Painters*, he said: "The arrangement of materials which I have been collecting for ten years brings with it perpetual memories of things which were left to be done at the last—*i.e.*, just now—and the quantity of mortar which I want, to put all together, is so great that I must needs go to gather stubble, for myself—nobody being able to help me, and time a hard taskmaster."[2] And then with regard to the literary workmanship: "a sentence of *Modern Painters*," he says, "was often written four or five times over in my own hand, and tried in every word for perhaps an hour—perhaps a forenoon—before it was passed for the printer."[3] So, again, in a letter to his father (Jan. 18, 1852) he said:—

"I took great pains with most of the *Seven Lamps*, and, I recollect, as I read over the passages, the labour they cost me—some

[1] *Modern Painters*, preface to vol. iii.

[2] Letter to Mrs. Acland, July 10, 1855.

[3] *Fiction, Fair and Foul*, § 123. See also above, p. 320.

of them being as highly finished as it is, I believe, possible for me to finish prose. I remember, for instance, that the last half-page of the 'Lamp of Beauty' cost me a whole forenoon—from ten to two, and that then I went out to walk quite tired, and yet not satisfied with the last sentence, and turned and re-turned it all the way to Dulwich."

I am able to certify this account of laborious revision as being true, not only of the books specially mentioned by Ruskin, but of all of which the manuscript is extant.

II

Ruskin has been named by Lord Morley as one of the "three giants of prose style" who strode across the literature of the nineteenth century.[1] Matthew Arnold cited a passage from *Modern Painters* as marking the highest point to which the art of prose can ever hope to reach. Tennyson, on being asked to name the six authors in whom the stateliest English prose was to be found, gave—Hooker, Bacon, Milton, Jeremy Taylor, De Quincey, and Ruskin. I have lived for many years behind the scenes, as it were, of Ruskin's pageant of style—a pageant as full of variety as of splendour. Through his diaries, note-books, and letters, I have been admitted to all the secrets of his literary workshop. What, I may be asked, *are* the secrets? I suppose the truest answer would be to say that there are none. You may analyse a style into its component parts as systematically as you like; you may trace, label, and collate as diligently as you can; and you will be little nearer in the end, than in the beginning, to the secret of a great writer's charm and power. The essential features are those which are underived, incommunicable, individual. The style is the man. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every man that is born of the spirit." But there is always a certain interest in tracing a great writer's models

[1] See below, p. 389.

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and methods. Ruskin's prose style was even in his earliest essays his own, and, except in the case of the second volume of *Modern Painters*, he did not consciously imitate any model. But every day he had great models before him. There were two tasks which he seldom omitted; they were undertaken primarily for edification and enlightenment, but they also influenced his style. He rose with the sun, and before breakfast made notes of a few verses of the Bible—discussing with himself the precise force and meaning of every word, exactly as he tells us in *Sesame* to do with all our serious reading; and then he took down his Plato and translated a passage from the *Republic* or the *Laws*. Plato was more particularly the study of his later period, and it coloured much of his writing. The Platonic charm which mingles humour and seriousness, the Platonic irony which propounds a paradox with mischievous innocence, are very frequent in *Fors Clavigera*. They were almost the staple of many of his "Arrows of the Chace," and they rippled sparklingly through much of his conversation —to the sad bewilderment, sometimes, of people who, when they are serious at all, like to be serious altogether. Ruskin's Bible studies were constant throughout his life. The Bible is the indispensable handbook to any close study of his works; and it must be in Greek and Latin, as well as in English, for he was in the habit of comparing the three, quoting from the Septuagint, the Vulgate, or the Authorised Version, according as he found one or the other the fullest in meaning or grandest in sound. Many a long and arduous search has this habit caused to his editors. It was all very well to have a Cruden's Concordance at your elbow, but Cruden went mad before he had thought of indexing the other versions. Thanks be unto him, however, for having included the Apocrypha—a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures with which Ruskin was as familiar as with the Canonical Books. The constant study of the Bible coloured alike Ruskin's thought and his style; it is ingrained in the texture of almost every piece from his pen. Some one has counted sixty Bible references in a single lecture. I have not counted, but I think that the total number of such

references, traced in the Index to his Complete Works, must be about 5000. He knew the Bible almost by heart, and he generally quoted it in his books from memory. The accuracy of his memory, here as in other matters, was very great. I can recall only one slip, and that a very small one, in his references to the Bible. It occurs in the chapter on the Early Renaissance in *The Stones of Venice*. He is there speaking of the learning which the mighty Venetian masters wore without feeling it encumber their living limbs. "But I speak," he goes on, "of the Renaissance as an evil time, because, when it saw those men go burning forth into the battle, it mistook their armour for their strength; and forthwith encumbered with the painful panoply every stripling who ought to have gone forth only with his own choice of three smooth stones out of the brook." Now the number of smooth stones which David chose him out of the brook was *five*. The two odd stones are hardly worth throwing at Ruskin's memory.

The verification of references was a task which was not congenial in Ruskin's literary workshop, and sometimes it was, of deliberation, omitted. In one of his essays he had quoted Keats's line as "For ever shalt thou love, and she be fair." Mr. Wedderburn pointed out the slight misquotation, when reading the proof of the paper; but Ruskin left it, saying, "Never mind, they'll see I quoted from memory." He was, and he was not, a great reader. He was not a reader in the sense of a student who sets himself to master everything that has been written on a given subject. He eschewed commentaries. But he was a large reader of the original texts in classical literature—mostly in English, Greek, Latin, and Dante (to whom his references number some hundreds), but a good deal also in French. He filled many note-books, but his entries in them were (except in the case of the Greek and Latin writers) more in the nature of his own reflections on things read, than by way of collections in aid of memory. The range and extent of his literary allusiveness entailed very heavy labour in the editing of his works; for he seldom gave his references, and, when he did, not infrequently gave

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them wrongly. He was fond of introducing allusions, not only to literature, but to events, sayings, or writings of the passing day. He read the newspapers diligently, and was in the habit, as I have already noted,[1] of filing significant items. Some volumes of newspaper-cuttings, which once stood in his workshop, have come under my observation. Those who read Ruskin without a knowledge of his allusions to passing incidents will certainly miss much of the meaning, even if they do not gather sometimes a most erroneous impression. For instance, in various places Ruskin girds at the then Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser—accusing him, in one place, of "not being able to *see* much," and, in another, of "lascivious *thirst*." Putting the two charges together, a reader might suppose that Ruskin accused the blameless Bishop of some personal failing. Well, he did accuse Dr. Fraser of a good deal, but not of anything like that. What he was referring to in each passage was a speech once made by the Bishop in which, defending Manchester's desire to *drink* of the waters of the Lake Country, he had added that after all he supposed that not many people had ever *seen* Thirlmere.

Another trick of Ruskin's writing is what may be called a habit of esoteric allusiveness: but this is only to be found in some of his pieces. He had, as he said, three different ways of writing:—

> "One with the single view of making myself understood, in which I necessarily omit a great deal of what comes into my head.
>
> "Another in which I say what I think ought to be said, in what I suppose to be the best words I can find for it.
>
> "And my third way of writing is to say all that comes into my head for my own pleasure, in the first words that come, retouching them afterwards into approximate grammar."[2]

Ruskin in this third manner is often difficult to follow. I will give a passage in illustration. He is talking about the infinite patience which the art of engraving requires,

[1] See above, p. 273.

[2] *The Queen of the Air*, § 134.

and has compared it to that of the patient Griselda; and then he goes on:— CHAP. XVIII.

"I cannot get to my work in this paper, somehow; the web of these old enigmas entangles me again and again. That rough syllable which begins the name of Griselda, 'Gries,' 'the stone'; the roar of the long fall of the Toccia seems to mix with the sound of it, bringing thoughts of the great Alpine patience; mute snow wreathed by grey rock, till avalanche time comes—patience of mute tormented races till the time of the Grey league came; at last impatient. (Not that hitherto it has hewn its way to much: the Rhine foam of the Via Mala seeming to have done its work better.) But it is a noble colour that Grison Grey;—dawn colour—graceful for a faded silk to ride in, and wonderful, in paper, for getting a glow upon, if you begin wisely."[1]

This passage will, I imagine, be largely unintelligible to many readers. But one who knows his Ruskin and is familiar with the turns and twists of the author's thought will have understood how Griselda brings into his head memories of the Tosa Falls beneath the Gries glacier; then, how one Pass recalled another to his mind and made him think of the long oppression of Rætia under petty tyrants, and of the long Alpine patience of "The Mountain Gloom"; and then, how the rule of the petty chieftains was at last shaken off by the formation of the Grison Confederation, in which one of the constituents was the Grey League; hence the name of the present canton (Graubünden, Grisons). Next, in thinking of the central defile, the Via Mala, he doubts whether the men of the Graubünden have hewn their own way in the world so decisively as the foaming river. Then the colour of Grison Grey recalls to him at one moment Tennyson's Enid ("Earl, entreat her by my love, Albeit I give no reason but my wish, That she ride with me in her faded silk"); and, at the next, Turner's brilliant water-colour sketches on grey paper—wonderful achievements, possible only to one who had begun wisely by long discipline and

[1] *The Cestus of Aglaia*, § 35.

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had learnt the art of making each touch tell from the beginning. Every one of those allusions has its parallel passage in some other place of the author's writings. Ruskin in his esoteric manner has to be interpreted by Ruskin. The titles of many of his books are full of the same manner.

III

But what were his methods in his other and more general manners, when he had the single view of making himself understood and said what he desired in the best words he could find for it? What was his secret? He would have told us, I think, what he reported Turner as saying, "I know of no genius but the genius of hard work." There is no writer who gives a stronger impression of ease than Cardinal Newman—a great master of simple and lucid English, greater in these particular respects, if we take the whole body of their writings, than Ruskin. Yet even Newman said: "I have been obliged to take great pains with everything I have written, and I often write chapters over and over again, besides innumerable corrections and interlined additions." Ruskin's method was the same. The search for the right word, for the fitting sentence, was often long; and paragraphs and chapters were written over and over again before they satisfied him. And this applies equally to his most simple writing, such as is to be found, for instance, in *The Elements of Drawing*; and to his most elaborate passages, such as the exordiums and perorations in *Modern Painters*, *The Seven Lamps*, and *The Stones of Venice*. He carried on the process to the stage of proofs, revises, and re-revises. Facsimiles of pages re-written on the printed proof are included in the Library Edition, and in this connexion Dr. Furnivall gave me an anecdote. To Ruskin's father the publisher came one day exhibiting a thickly scored final revise and explaining that continuance in such practices would absorb all the author's profits. "Don't let my son know," said the old gentleman; "John must have his things as he likes them; pay him

whatever would become due, apart from corrections, and send in a separate bill for them to me." Few authors, it may be feared, are blessed with so indulgent a parent.

Let us now open the door of the workshop, and note a few instances of the revisions which occupied so many hours and days of Ruskin's literary life. I will take first the description of the old tower of Calais, a passage much admired, as we have heard, by Rossetti. The following was the first draft :—

"The large neglect, the noble unsightliness of it; the decay and record of its years written so visibly upon it, yet without danger, sign of weakness, or decay; the stern, meagre massiveness and quiet gloom of its poverty; gnawed away by the channel winds, and overgrown with the black and bitter sea grasses; stripped of all comeliness as if by a blight; its slates and tiles all shaken and rent, and yet not falling; its brickwork full of bolts and holes and grisly fissures, and yet stable like a bare brown rock; its stripped barrenness and desertness; its utter carelessness of what regards it or thinks of it in passing by; putting forth no claim upon us; having no beauty, nor desirableness, nor pride, nor grace, and yet asking for no pity, neither; it is not like ruins, pensive, piteous, feebly or fondly garrulous of its better days and yet useless; but useful still, going through its own daily work, as some old fisherman beaten grey by storm, yet drawing his daily net; so it stands with no memory of its youth, nor sweetness, tenderness of age, complaint of its past nor wofulness; but in blanched and meagre massiveness and serviceableness, gathering souls together beneath it; the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents; and the grey peak of it seen far across the sea, principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore—the lighthouse, for Life and Death; and the Hall belfry, for Labour and Rest; and this Church Tower, for Praise."

The passage went through many intermediate shapes before its final form was arrived at; but comparing this first form with the last, the reader will note how the author omitted superfluous words, pared down alliterations, and knit the sounds together into closer harmony with the sense. Mr.

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Frederic Harrison, in a careful analysis of Ruskin's literary *technique*, has observed how much the author relies upon *assonance* for his effect; meaning by assonance, as distinct from alliteration, "the recurrence of the same, or of cognate sounds, not merely in the first letter of words, but where the stress comes, in any part of a word, and that in sounds whether vowel or consonant."[1] The passage just given is cited in illustration, and it is interesting to note that, while some of the effects in question—as, for instance, the expressive phrase "the sound . . . rolling through its rents"—were written down at once, others were obtained after many retouchings—as, for instance, in the last words, with the triple alliteration, the second of them being inverted ("*bel*fry for *lab*our"). To such analysis as this—most instructive to the student, and similar to that which the critic himself applied to Turner's compositions—Ruskin would perhaps have remarked, in the words which, as he mentions, were used by Tennyson when some one pointed out to the poet various laws deducible from his versification: "It's all true; I do observe them, but I never knew it."[2]

Another passage in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* is cited by Mr. Harrison for its majestic effect as a whole, and for its incidental felicities—the account of the peasants of the Valais, in the chapter on "The Mountain Gloom." Here, again, the first draft will repay careful comparison with the final version in the text:—

"*They know not* the name of beauty nor of knowledge. They *know* dimly that of virtue. Love, patience, hospitality, *truth*, faith, —these things they know *so far as they can be known*. To glean their meadows side by side, so happier; to bear *the bitter frost and* burden up the breathless mountain *side*, *without murmuring*; to bid the stranger drink from their vessel of milk; *to look dimly forward*; to see at the foot of their low death-beds *the form* of a pale figure upon a cross, dying patiently *as they*; *all this separates them* from the cattle and the stones; *of all this they are capable*; but in all this

[1] "Ruskin as Master of Prose," in *Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill, and other Literary Estimates*, 1899, p. 62.

[2] *Addresses on Decorative Colour*, § 30 (Lib. Ed., vol. xii. p. 500).

unrewarded as far as concerns *this* present life. For them there is neither hope nor *action* of spirit; *for them no progress or joy. Hard* roof, dark night, laborious day, *thirst*, weary arms at sunset; *these are their life.* No books, no thoughts, *no change of passion.* Only sometimes *a day of rest and* a little sitting in the sun under the church wall as the bell tolls thin and far in the mountain air; a pattering of a few prayers, not understood, *in the dark* chapel; *an evening spent by the more sober in a vague act of adoration*, and so back to the sombre home, with the cloud upon them still unbroken—*a strange* cloud of rocky gloom, *heavy and hopeless*, born out of the wild torrents and *shapeless* stones, and unlightened, even in their religion, except by the *hope* of some better thing unknown, mingled with threatening, and obscured by an unspeakable horror, *—a feverish scent as it were of martyrdom and torture mingled with the incense, a perpetual memory of shattered bodies and warped wills*, and lamenting spirits and hurtling flames—the very cross, for them, *bedragged* more deeply with gouts of blood *than for others.*"

The words here printed in italics were either omitted, altered, or transposed in the ultimate text; and if the reader will compare the latter with this early draft, he will perceive how much the total effect was enhanced, and how many of the felicities by the way were introduced, during the author's revision. Some of these—the onomatopœic line, for instance, "as the bell tolls thin and far in the mountain air"—were thought of at once; but observe how different and more simple is the effect of "to bear the burden up the mountain flank, unmurmuringly," than in the first version; or note how the closing words—"the very cross, for them, dashed more deeply than for others, with gouts of blood"—have gained by a simple transposition, and the alteration of the word "bedragged." Ruskin spared no labour, it will be seen, to assist his mastery of language and intuitive sense for melody.

The next passage will illustrate the search for the right word. Every one remembers the beautiful close of the chapter on "The Lamp of Sacrifice":—

"All else for which the builders sacrificed has passed away—all their living interests, and aims, and achievements. . . . But of them,

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and their life and toil upon the earth, one reward, one evidence, is left to us in those grey *heaps* of deep-wrought stone. They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honours, and their errors; but they have left us their adoration."

The word which I have italicised gave Ruskin some trouble to find. He rejected successively "those grey eminences" and "those grey shadows." If the passage be read with the substitution of either of those rejected words, some of the effect and charm will be found to have gone. And with it, something else as well, to which I will return presently.

Another illustration will show Ruskin's labour in building up pointed and impressive sentences. Who that has once read it can ever forget—the opening passage of *The Stones of Venice*?—

"Since first the dominion of men was asserted over the ocean, three thrones, of mark beyond all others, have been set upon its sands: the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the First of these great powers only the memory remains; of the Second, the ruin; the Third, which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction."

The passage is beautiful in itself, and forms, alike in its cadence and in its thought, an overture to the whole work. But now read this, the first of several rejected versions (here given in the facsimile):—

"Since first the dominion of men was asserted over the sea, as well as over the earth, Three Thrones have been founded upon its sands, the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Two of these great powers have departed; of one, only the memory remains; of the second, the ruins; and the third will in vain have inherited their greatness if it cannot take warning from their example."

Every reader will have felt how much less near to perfection is the earlier version; indeed, here and there it is by comparison flat and trite, besides being less harmonious and impressive in sound. It is interesting to note how the process of polishing was done. The number of words in each version is, curiously, the same—sixty-eight. In

the work of revision the superfluous words—such as *as well as over the earth* and, with regard to Tyre and Venice, that their powers *have departed*, and at the end *if it cannot take warning*—were omitted. By compression in these cases Ruskin knits his clauses more closely together, and finds room, in the same given quantity of words, to introduce an ending which is not only beautiful in sound but which conveys an additional thought:—

"The Third, which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction."

The new thought, it will be seen, is that not merely is the fate of Tyre and Venice decreed for an example, but that the greater the power of our empire, the greater also is its responsibility—that to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and thus the opening of the book leads up with added emphasis to the passage a little later in which the author proposes—

"to record, as far as I may, the warning which seems to me to be uttered by every one of the fast-gaining waves that beat like passing bells against the Stones of Venice."

So, then, with Ruskin the work of revision meant something more than a search for beautiful sound; it meant the attainment of deeper and fuller sense. And exactly the same thing may be observed, I think, even in his alterations of single words. In the passage, for instance, given above from "The Lamp of Sacrifice," why is it that "those grey *heaps* of deep-wrought stone" should be preferred to the other words which he tried? *Eminences* made, it is true, an unpleasant jingle with the preceding *evidence;* but *shadows* might have sounded well enough. Why did he reject it? Was it not because the word *heaps*, with the associations which it suggests, added a fresh thought?—conveying to us, as we read, the idea of labour and sacrifice in the builders—as in Matthew Arnold's lines:—

"With aching hands and bleeding feet
They dig and *heap*, lay stone on stone."

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These instances illustrate a further fact than which none impressed me more in the course of editing Ruskin's writings. He revised and elaborated not merely in search of pleasant sound or rhetorical pomp, but to chasten, to deepen, and to impress. If any reader be interested in such details, he will find in the notes to the Library Edition a large number of instances—showing the gradual selection of final words and phrases, the discovery of felicities after long search, the rejection of rhetorical adornments; and in almost every case he will see that the revision was towards greater compression or simplicity. Here I content myself with a general observation. Ruskin did not despise the more mechanical resources of his art—why should he?—he employed largely the methods of alliteration, assonance, antithesis. But neither these, nor metaphor, allusion, images were of the essence of the matter. And that is why he hated to be called a mere word-painter. He *was* a word-painter, but he painted always "with his eye on the object" and with his mind on the thought. Ruskin himself in one of his later pamphlets gave incidentally a case in point. The chapter in *Modern Painters* on "The Firmament," which appears in most volumes of elegant extracts from Ruskin, contains this passage:—

> "I understand the making of the firmament to signify that, so far as man is concerned, most magnificent ordinance of the clouds;—the ordinance, that as the great plain of waters was formed on the face of the earth, so also a plain of waters should be stretched along the height of air, and the face of the cloud answer the face of the ocean; and that this upper and heavenly plain should be of waters, as it were, glorified in their nature, no longer quenching the fire, but now bearing fire in their own bosoms; no longer murmuring only when the winds raise them or rocks divide, but answering each other with their own voices from pole to pole; no longer restrained by established shores, and guided through unchanged channels, but going forth at their pleasure like the armies of the angels. . . ."

Such passages as this, he said, "usually thought of by the public merely as word-painting," "are in reality accurately

abstracted, and finally concentrated, expressions of the general laws of natural phenomena":— CHAP. XVIII.

"Thus the sentence 'murmuring only when the winds raise them, or rocks divide,' does not describe, or word-paint, the sound of waters, but (with only the admitted art of a carefully reiterated 'r') sums the general *causes* of it; while, again, the immediately following one, defining the limitations of sea and river, 'restrained by established shores, and guided through unchanging channels,' attempts no word-painting either of coast or burnside; but states, with only such ornament of its simplicity as could be got of the doubled 't' and doubled 'ch,' the fact of the stability of existing rock structure which I was, at that time, among geologists in asserting."[1]

And, generally, if any of us were to sit down and work out a description of something we had been looking at—a cathedral front, an Alpine meadow, a blade of grass, a picture by Tintoret—and then were to compare our description with Ruskin's, wherein should we find the difference to consist? It would not, I think, be merely that our sentences were less beautiful or eloquent; but we should find also, most of us, that we had stated fewer *facts*, and conveyed the impression of fewer, or less significant, *thoughts*. To Ruskin's art of writing may be applied what he laid down about the art of painting. "Finish," he said, in art simply means "telling more truth."

IV

Ruskin's handwriting shows three main "periods"—an early, a middle, and a late. The early—that which may be seen in the manuscript of his letters to Dale, now in the British Museum—is legible and regular, but not marked by any great individuality. In the middle period—to which the specimen given in this chapter belongs—the writing is daintier; there is more character in it, especially in the formation of the capitals. It must be to this period that an

[1] Preface to *Cœli Enarrant* (1885).

[2] *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. ix. § 18.

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anecdote told by Mr. W. M. Rossetti refers. "My brother was one day in a picture-gallery (perhaps the National Gallery), and he took out of his pocket, for perusal, a letter recently received from Ruskin. Some person (unknown to Rossetti) passed by, and gave a glance at the handwriting, and he then said to my brother: 'Will you excuse me for saying that, in passing, my eye happened to fall upon that letter, and, being an expert in handwriting, I cannot resist the conviction that the writer must be one of the most remarkable men living: might I inquire who it is?'"[1] In his last period, Ruskin wrote with greater freedom and his curves were further flung; but there were marked differences according as he was careful or careless, well or ill, calm or excited.

After revising his manuscript, Ruskin used often to have it read out to him by a friend or assistant, in order the better to judge of the sound of his words. He very rarely dictated, but it was one of the duties of his personal servant—successively "George," Crawley, and Baxter—to make fair copies of his rough drafts; a task often undertaken in later years by Mrs. Severn. The last revises of all were entrusted to his friend, W. H. Harrison, who looked out for printers' errors and kept a stern eye upon Ruskin's grammar and punctuation:—

"He was inexorable in such matters," said Ruskin, "and many a sentence in *Modern Painters*, which I had thought quite beautifully turned out after a forenoon's work on it, had to be turned outside-in, after all, and cut into smallest pieces and sewn up again, because he had found out there wasn't a nominative in it, or a genitive, or a conjunction, or something else indispensable to a sentence's decent existence and position in life. Not a book of mine, for good thirty years, but went, every word of it, under his careful eyes twice over —often also the last revises left to his tender mercy altogether on condition he wouldn't bother me any more."[2]

Harrison was "inexorable," and also meticulous. The author

[1] *Ruskin, Rossetti, and Pre-Raphaelitism*, p. 11.
[2] "My First Editor," reprinted in *On the Old Road*.

and his proof-reviser had many a long-drawn tussle over a preposition or a comma. "You have an unfilial hatred," wrote Harrison in submitting to a defeat, "for your mother tongue." Ruskin used to say that for his own part his grammar was always home-made. A friend once asked him "how a master of English could allow himself to write such a sentence as 'And I didn't want to.'" He replied, with a laughing parody, "I have never yet written good English grammar, and I never mean to."

Unlike some authors, Ruskin was not a slave to his tools, and had no indispensable apparatus or fad. Much of his literary work was done in foreign inns or wayside lodgings, and he thus became independent of his surroundings. At home, he wrote not on a desk, but on the flat of the table; a habit which may have encouraged the rounded back of his later years. He used for choice a cork penholder with a fine steel pen, and he generally wrote on ruled foolscap paper. His workroom at Denmark Hill was at the back of the house, over the breakfast room, and looked into the garden. A large oblong table occupied "so much of the—say fifteen by five-and-twenty—feet of available space within bookcases, that the rest of the floor virtually was only a passage round it."

This workshop was not literary only. He was not merely an author; he was also the artist who illustrated his own books. We must picture it as strewn not only with manuscripts, proofs, revises, but also with leaves and flowers to be drawn, with engravings in all states for correction and retouching. Something has been told, in previous chapters, of the amount of practice and study in drawing which went to the making of his books; but a particular instance, given in greater detail, will best illustrate the industry of his workshop. Much of the argument in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* is enforced from Turner's Alpine drawing which Ruskin called sometimes "The Gates of the Hills," and sometimes "The Pass of Faido" or "The St. Gothard." Turner's first sketch of the scene was made in 1842; it is now among the sketches lent by the National Gallery to the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford. The drawing

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from the sketch, to which the artist himself used characteristically to refer as "that litter of stones," was made in 1843 as a commission from Ruskin. He was full of admiration for it, and one of his principal purposes in his Continental journey in 1845 was to find the scene depicted by the artist. He spent some days at Faido, sketching the spot and noting the processes of selection and invention followed by Turner (see above, p. 184). In 1852, on his way back from Venice, he again visited the scene (p. 280). And now observe the quantity of study which, founded on these personal observations, he put into his analysis of Turner's drawing. From his sketches on the spot he etched a topographical outline (Plate 20). He made "a careful translation into black and white" of the left-hand upper part of Turner's drawing; this was shown in the Ruskin Exhibition at Manchester, 1904 (No. 146, upper drawing). He etched the same portion (Plate 37, "Crests of the Slaty Crystallines"). Again, he traced the leading lines in this portion of the drawing (Fig. 70). He made a reduced outline of the whole drawing, exhibited at Manchester (No. 146, lower drawing), and etched it (Plate 21). He copied the central portion of the drawing to be engraved as the frontispiece to the fourth volume ("The Gates of the Hills"); the drawing for this engraving was also exhibited at Manchester. Finally he drew a piece of the torrent bed on the left, for the engraving called "Rocks in Unrest," in the fifth volume (Plate 81). I have seen it suggested that Ruskin was not qualified to be an art-critic because his range of study was restricted. This biography will, I think, impress a reader as much with the extent, as with the limitations, of his study. But it is true in some degree that he studied *non multa sed multum*, and the detailed study given to this drawing by Turner was very characteristic of him. What he preached, he practised. "Foolish and ambitious persons," he says, "think they can form their judgment by seeing much art of all kinds. . . . To have well studied one picture by Tintoret, one by Luini, one by Angelico, and a couple of Turner's drawings, will teach a man more than to have catalogued all the galleries of

Europe."[1] "Power of criticism does not consist in knowing the names or the manner of many painters, but in discerning the excellence of a few."[2] And again, "The sum of enjoyment depends not on the quantity of things tasted, but on the vivacity and patience of taste."[3]

To the work of making the drawings was added that of supervising the engraving of them. The three latter volumes of *Modern Painters* alone contained 84 full-page plates and 225 other illustrations printed with the text. And even these figures do not give the full measure of Ruskin's work; for before deciding to incur the expense of so many steel plates, he had made experiments in another kind, drawing the subjects, afterwards engraved on steel, on wood blocks.[4] A considerable number of the plates were etched by Ruskin himself; for the rest, he had at his disposal the services of a school of engravers which had not yet been threatened by the competition of photography. They included J. C. Armytage, T. S. Boys, J. Cousen, R. P. Cuff, J. H. Le Keux, and Thomas Lupton. The trouble which Ruskin took in supervising the work, and the pleasant relations which he maintained with his engravers, are shown by various letters and statements:—

(*To his Father.*) "Venice, *March* 17, 1852.—Cuff's experiment most excellent; you rightly find fault with the want of the little refinements in distribution of shades, but these things can never be expected in a copy. If these refinements *were* perceived and followed, Cuff would cease to be Cuff and become Ruskin. A touch or two on the missed parts would put it nearly right: although the difference between a thing done by the artist's own hand, and a copy, however able, is always the difference between gold and gilding. But Cuff has done this little bit excellently, and with a degree of *pains* to copy accurately which only he and Armytage will take. Nevertheless, it will have to be done again, for it is to go on a large plate with five

[1] *Notes on his drawings by Turner*, 17–19 R.

[2] *Cambridge Address*, § 7.

[3] *Unto this Last*, § 84. See also Vol. II. p. 196.

[4] Some of the blocks, drawn on by Ruskin, were exhibited at Manchester (Nos. 528-534).

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other traceries, and there was a mistake in the measurements of this."

(*To* J. H. Le Keux.) *Circ.* 1858.—"The subjects of the next volume are Trees, Clouds, Waves, Buildings, Dragons, Moral Sentiments, and Things in General. You shall engrave a dragon or a moral sentiment if you like; but something, please, for I shall be sadly short of my illustrations."

(Statement by Mr. Le Keux.) "Mr. Ruskin never fixed a price; I charged what I liked; he never complained—in fact, offered more. One Plate, 'The Tree Stump of Claude,' he said I had made *too good*, having put in too much touch. I promised to alter it. On my next visit I took him another proof, which is the Plate printed. He asked me how I had altered it so well. I told him I had not altered the Plate, but had engraved another, as it was much less trouble than scraping out and altering. 'Then charge me for both Plates,' was his request. I did so. Mr. Ruskin was especially pleased with 'The Moat of Nuremberg.' The tree stem of Albert Dürer, reproduced line for line in the Plate of tree stems, he thought a marvel."[1]

What Le Keux charged, I do not know; but Boys received £33, 10s. for a plate, and Lupton £40. These figures show how costly the illustrated volumes were to produce, and explain the high prices at which the original editions were sold.

Ruskin was on the same friendly terms with his printers and proof-readers, and showed them the same generous consideration, as in the case of his engravers. His *Academy Notes* often had to be printed in a hurry. "I believe," he wrote to his publisher, "that Spottiswoode must have kept some of their men to finish this. I am very much obliged to them, and should like the printers who stayed in to do it to have half-a-crown each from me for a holiday present." He was never too busy to add a pleasant word in sending proofs to the printer's reader. Thus: "All is right now but the 'Robert Stevenson,' page 11. I mean the great engineer; you must put the name right, if it isn't—*I* don't know engineers' names." And again: "Dear Mr. Chester,

[1] *Bibliography of Ruskin*, by Wise and Smart, vol. ii. p. 34.

I never knew anything so wonderful as the way you have got my scrawl printed. Literally, only two words wrong in the 18 pages." With Mr. Jowett, the head-printer at Messrs. Hazell, Watson & Viney's Aylesbury works, where Ruskin's later books were set up, he maintained a familiar correspondence—discussing not only technical points, but literary matters, and ending "ever affectionately yours." His relations with booksellers similarly show his geniality and warm-heartedness. Books to him, as to Milton, were "not absolutely dead things"; they were "kings and statesmen lingering patiently, not to grant audience but to gain it";[1] and the bookseller was thus a court-chamberlain, whose private ear it was a privilege to have. Ruskin had dealings during many years with the late Mr. Bernard Quaritch; and though they had their disputes, Ruskin enjoyed few things more than a chat and a rummage in Mr. Quaritch's shop. The late Mr. F. S. Ellis, again, printed a series of Ruskin's letters to him,[2] and the course of the correspondence is very characteristic. In ordering books, Ruskin soon begins dropping critical remarks by the way. An invitation to Brantwood follows. "Truly" and "faithfully" pass into "affectionately"; and finally, when Mr. Ellis had given some prudent advice which Ruskin valued, he becomes "Papa" Ellis—a brevet relationship which he had the honour of sharing with Rawdon Brown and Carlyle. On one occasion Ruskin had ordered a copy of Sir Thomas More. "Thank you," he replied, in acknowledging the book, "for getting the *Utopia* for me. What an infinitely wise—infinitely foolish—book it is! Right in all it asks—insane, in venturing to ask it, all at once—so making its own wisdom folly for evermore; and becoming perhaps the most really mischievous book ever written—except *Don Quixote*." I doubt if such a thing exists as a business letter from Ruskin, pure and simple. Whoever served him in any business capacity had to be his friend. Not engravers, printers, and booksellers only, but the dealers who supplied

[1] *Sesame and Lilies*, § 6.

[2] *Stray Letters from Professor Ruskin to a London Bibliopole*, privately printed 1892.

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him with minerals, and the cutters whom he employed to polish his specimens, received with their orders some expression of his views or good wishes. A mere cash nexus never satisfied him. There was nothing mechanical in his workshop. In small things as in great it was the human relationship that he sought.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE

(1854–1858)

"Not what we give but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare."—LOWELL.

I

IN the remainder of this volume, I propose to depart from a severely chronological order. The period in Ruskin's life, during which he wrote the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters* (1854–56), and after many delays (1856–60) completed the book, was one of most multifarious activity. We shall obtain a better idea, I think, of his work, his interests, his thoughts, his influence, by considering various aspects of them separately, than if we followed his movements by the calendar. I shall deal, therefore, with him successively, as teacher at the Working Men's College and drawing-master at large (Chap. XIX.); as Art Censor (Chap. XX.); as Turner's Executor (Chap. XXI.); and as Public Lecturer (Chap. XXII.). Then, some account will be given of his home-life, his friendships, his correspondence (Chaps. XXIII., XXIV.); and, finally, the studies and the mental developments, made and experienced for the most part during tours abroad, will be described which went to the completion of *Modern Painters* (Chap. XXV.). A very brief summary, supplementary to that given above (p. 336), will here suffice to enable the reader to bring the various threads into chronological connexion. After sending the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters* to press in the spring of 1856, Ruskin went abroad. He hurried home in the autumn upon hearing that Turner's bequest had been handed over to the nation, and he set to work

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at once on various Notes and Catalogues. During the winter he was further engaged, partly in connexion with his classes at the Working Men's College, in writing *The Elements of Drawing*. In 1857 he did much further work on the Turner collection; he delivered various public lectures; and after a holiday in Scotland resumed work at the College and in the National Gallery. In 1858 he finished his sorting of the Turner drawings; again gave lectures, and for several months was on the Continent. In 1859 he gave more lectures, wrote *The Elements of Perspective*, and again spent some months on the Continent. In each year (1855–59) he wrote a pamphlet on the Royal Academy and other picture exhibitions; and during this period he was much concerned with the building of the Oxford Museum. In the spring of 1860 the last volume of *Modern Painters* was sent to press. A full life, it will be seen!

II

In the last chapter we followed Ruskin into his literary workshop; but he was never entirely a recluse or a student. Still less was he ever an æsthete, absorbed in art for art's sake. He wanted to do, as well as to write. He would have agreed with that fine saying by Edward FitzGerald, out of which Tennyson made his poem "Romney's Remorse," on the beauty of good action "even as a matter of art." The more Ruskin found that the influence of his books was spreading, the more he yearned to supplement writing by personal effort. "One may do more with a man," he once said, "by getting ten words spoken with him face to face, than by the black lettering of a whole life's thought."[1] Something also in his public activities at this time was due, I think, to the circumstances of his domestic life. Tongues were wagging; and he wanted to face the world. But chiefly Ruskin desired to find an inner harmony between the artistic and the moral sides of his nature. More and more his studies among books and

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 17.

pictures and in nature were coming to be mingled with urgent thoughts of political reformation and personal service. He could not entirely be satisfied with quiet work in his study at Denmark Hill. He wanted his actions, as well as his written words, to advance the Kingdom. CHAP. XIX.

III

One scope for practical work he found in lectures and classes to artisans at the Architectural Museum. A principal aim of this institution, which had been founded in 1851, was to render possible the training of workmen in the arts of their crafts. "Singularly enough among all the antiquarian collections in London, accessible to the public, there were none which included a good assortment of casts from decorative sculpture, and the few which did exist were almost exclusively taken from classic and Italian examples. The advisability of securing such objects for the inspection and study, not only of young architects, but of art-workmen, became apparent to all who knew how much the success of modern Gothic depends on the spirit and vigour of its details."[1] The Architectural Museum was founded by a few architects and amateurs to supply the deficiency, and Ruskin threw himself heartily into assisting a scheme which fell in so entirely with the ideas and aspirations expressed by him in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and in the chapter of *The Stones of Venice* on "The Nature of Gothic." During his stay in Venice, he had casts of Venetian architecture made for presentation to the Museum. He also secured casts from the panels on the north doorway of Rouen Cathedral and from those of the great door of Notre Dame of Paris. The first casts of Gothic architectural sculpture available for public study in this country were thus due to Ruskin. He also presented to the Museum a series of the Seals of England, and placed there a selection of his drawings of foreign architecture. His interest in illuminated manuscripts found expression

[1] C. L. Eastlake's *History of the Gothic Revival*, p. 299.

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in a course of three lectures on "Decorative Colour" which he delivered at the Museum during the winter months (1854), and he also attended in the evenings to direct the students in the study and practice of the art of illumination. The pleasures of acquisition, in the case of illuminated books, were thus combined with the fulfilment of service to others. The students attending the Museum were formed into a society, and he instituted prizes among them for work in architectural sculpture. It was to this "Architectural Museum Society," on the occasion of a presentation of the Ruskin Prizes, that one of the lectures printed in *The Two Paths*—that on Conventional Art—was delivered. One of the prize winners was O'Shea, a workman employed on the Oxford Museum.

To the year 1854 belongs a pamphlet by Ruskin which shows the same architectural enthusiasm, and the same mingling of artistic interest with social sympathies. As is not uncommonly the case with his works, the title—*The Opening of the Crystal Palace*—gives no very immediate or obvious indication of its contents. The real subject is a plea for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments: the title tells us only of the occasion which suggested the piece. In June 1854 the newspapers had been full of the new Palace at Sydenham. It was thought intolerable that the Great Exhibition should pass away as though it had never been. It was decided, therefore, to construct out of its materials a permanent Hall of Glass which should continue and extend the educational and artistic influence of the Exhibition. The Palace was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, and was opened by Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort in state on June 10, 1854. Ruskin, as appears from this pamphlet, and from passages in his other writings, shared to the full the high and generous hopes with which the Palace was started upon its chequered career. "It is impossible," he says, "to estimate the influence of such an institution on the minds of the working classes"; and he took particular interest in a collection of casts of sculpture and architecture which had been made for exhibition in the Palace. But in the pæans of popular

enthusiasm which saw, in the Exhibition and the Palace, the birth of a new Order of Architecture, as well as the dawn of a New Era, Ruskin could have no sympathy. He had already protested in *The Stones of Venice* against the notion that the construction of a greenhouse "larger than ever greenhouse was built before" had any artistic significance, however great its mechanical ingenuity might be. And while the British public was congratulating itself on having achieved, in its halls of glass, "an entirely novel order of architecture," the old architecture of the world was perishing every day by fire, war, revolution, and neglect; and by a foe even more destructive than any of these—namely, "restoration." This is the main theme of the pamphlet, which thus carries a stage further the plea for the preservation of ancient buildings already advanced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and repeated in scattered passages of later writings. But here Ruskin adds a practical suggestion. "An association," he says, "might be formed, thoroughly organised so as to maintain active watchers and agents in every town of importance, who, in the first place, should furnish the society with a *perfect* account of every monument of interest in its neighbourhood, and then with a yearly or half-yearly report of the state of such monuments, and of the changes proposed to be made upon them." Ruskin's scheme was that which William Morris carried out twenty-three years later in the formation of "The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings"—a title altered by Morris for popular usage into "The Anti-Scrape." Of this Society both Ruskin and Carlyle were original members. Ruskin suggested, further, that the Association should in cases of need save ancient monuments from destruction by purchase—an object partly aimed at by the recently formed "National Trust." The pamphlet is of further interest as containing—like most of Ruskin's writings on architecture—an incidental passage which is eloquent of his strong and growing social sympathies. In this passage he describes the "few feet of ground (how few!) which are indeed all that separate the merriment from the misery." The time was presently to come when, in words of yet

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more poignant appeal, he was to call upon his generation to "raise the veil boldly" and "face the light"; and when, having made his appeal to others, he was himself to embark on direct schemes of social amelioration.

IV

Meanwhile Ruskin found another, and a more continuously absorbing, scope for personal service, at the Working Men's College, situated first in Red Lion Square and afterwards in Great Ormond Street. This is one of many institutions which owe their origin to the co-operative movement, promoted by a small group of men inspired by the leadership of Frederick Denison Maurice. "There was then, it must be remembered, no means by which a working man or a poor man could get, in a systematic way, any education going beyond the bare elements of knowledge."[1] School Boards had not been heard of. The churches and chapels did much for elementary education, but their efforts touched only a fraction of the people. The masses were agitating for political rights, but they were as yet ill-equipped for their exercise. "Mechanics' Institutes" had existed for some years, but, said Dickens, "I have never seen with these eyes of mine a mechanic in any recognised position on the platform of a Mechanics' Institute." Here and there, too, Evening Classes had been established, but they aimed at nothing higher than the three R's. The Working Men's College aimed at bringing within the reach of the working-classes the same *kind* of education that the upper classes enjoyed. It saw in education a means of life, as well as of livelihood. It sought not to help working-men to "get on" and "rise out of their class," but to improve themselves by satisfying the needs of their mental and spiritual natures. It was to provide, too, something more than lectures; it was to give teaching and also personal contact between the teacher and the taught. All this sounds like a commonplace to-day, but at the time it was new and revolutionary. It

[1] R. B. Litchfield, *The Beginnings of the Working Men's College.*

precisely fitted in with the ideas at which Ruskin had been arriving, and he wrote to Maurice offering to take charge of the art-teaching. "His volunteered adhesion," writes the historian of the College, "was of immense service. It not only gave a splendid start to the Art teaching, but helped the enterprise as a whole by letting the world know that one of the greatest Englishmen of the time was in active sympathy with it."

His example and persuasion enlisted other volunteers, and Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, and Burne-Jones at various times lent their aid. Lowes Dickinson, who continued to teach for some sixteen years, was himself one of the original founders of the College. At first Ruskin, Rossetti, and he worked together every Thursday evening. "There is no fear about teaching," wrote Ruskin to Rossetti; "all that the men want is to *see* a few touches done, and to be told where and why they are wrong in their work, in the simplest possible way." In the Easter term, 1855, the class was subdivided; Rossetti teaching the figure, Ruskin and Dickinson taking the elementary and landscape class, which in turn was afterwards subdivided, Ruskin taking a class by himself. He did not always attend throughout the summer term, though he frequently had his class come down to him in the country to sketch. Cabs were provided to meet the men at Camberwell Green on Saturday afternoon and take the party to the appointed sketching place, and the outing would finish with tea at the Greyhound Inn, Dulwich, or at Ruskin's house on Denmark Hill. During the rest of the year Ruskin taught regularly at the College from the autumn of 1854 until May 1858. In the spring of 1860 he returned to his class for a term; but a prolonged period of residence abroad then severed his regular connexion with the College, though he continued to visit it occasionally to give addresses or informal lectures. It will thus be seen that Ruskin's help to the College was much more than a spasm of sympathy or an indulgence in the presently fashionable occupation of intermittent philanthropy.

Ruskin taught his class both by precept and by practice. He gave many lectures and addresses at the College, and

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these were attended by others besides the students of his own class. On such occasions he would bring pictures or illuminated manuscripts for exhibition and explanation, or would describe his experiences and impressions on some foreign tour. Or he would season a discourse on art and life with some unexpected illustration. "I am only trying," he said once, "to teach you to *see*. Two men are walking through Clare Market. One of them comes out at the other end not a bit wiser than he went in. The other notices a bit of parsley hanging over the edge of a butter-woman's basket, and carries away with him images of beauty which in the course of his daily work he incorporates with it for many a day." No more of the lecture has been recorded, but any one familiar with Ruskin's writings will know how it may have been continued. He would have gone on to illustrate the beauty of the fine divisions in the leaf of parsley, to define its special manner of delightfulness as contrasted with other leaves, and then, perhaps, to trace the curious influence of the plant, from the days of the Parsley Crown to the butter-woman's basket, and so back to Clare Market. Or, again, in response to some question about social and political conditions, he would pour forth other questions, in the hope of leading the men to think out ultimate problems. On one occasion the subject of parliamentary reform was opened:—

"You are all agape, my friends," said Ruskin, "for this mighty privilege of having your opinions represented in Parliament. The concession might be desirable,—at all events courteous,—if only it were quite certain you had got any opinions to represent. But have you? Are you agreed on any single thing you systematically want? Less work and more wages, of course; but how much lessening of work do you suppose is possible? Do you think the time will ever come for everybody to have *no* work and *all* wages? . . . Have you planned the permanent state which you wish England to hold? Do you want her to be nothing but a large workshop and forge, so that the name of 'Englishman' shall be synonymous with 'ironmonger,' all over the world? or would you like to keep some of your lords and landed gentry still, and a few green fields and trees? . . . Your voices are not worth a rat's squeak, either

in Parliament or out of it, till you have some ideas to utter with them." CHAP. XIX.

Riddling words; yet not without a practical purpose. The point of them was, as the sequel showed, that the working-men might, if they chose, appoint their "own parliament, to deliberate upon the possible modes of the regulation of industry." The Trade Union Congress, often described as "The Parliament of Labour," was yet in the future at the time when Ruskin spoke. These addresses, whether on art or politics or (more frequently) upon both, made a deep impression. Madox Brown, by no means prejudiced in Ruskin's favour, wrote after hearing one of them: "Ruskin as eloquent as ever, and as wildly popular with the men." "We used to look forward to these talks," says "One who was often present," "with great interest. Formless and planless as they were, the effect on the hearers was immense. It was a wonderful bubbling up of all manner of glowing thoughts; for mere eloquence I never heard aught like it." [2]

The lectures at the College were only occasional; Ruskin's continuous work was in the teaching of his class. Here, as in all that he undertook, he lent his mind out. He threw into his teaching all the resources of his skill; and, in material matters, whatever he had, he shared:—

"How generous he was!" writes one of his pupils. "He taught each of us separately, studying the capacities of each student. For one pupil he would put a cairngorm pebble or fluor-spar into a tumbler of water, and set him to trace their tangled veins of crimson and amethyst. For another he would bring lichen and fungi from Anerley Woods. Once, to fill us with despair of colour, he bought a case of West Indian birds unstuffed, as the collector had stored them, all rubies and emeralds. Sometimes it was a Gothic missal, when he set us counting the order of the coloured leaves in each spray of the MS. At other times it was a splendid Albert Dürer woodcut. . . . One by one, he brought for us to examine his marvels of water-colour art from Denmark Hill. He would point out the subtleties and felicities in their composition,

[1] *Letters of Rossetti to Allingham*, p. 90.

[2] From a letter in *The Bookman*, March 1900.

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analysing on a blackboard their line schemes. . . . He had reams of the best stout drawing-paper made specially for us, supplying every convenience the little rooms would hold. He commissioned William Hunt of the Old Water-Colour Society to paint two subjects for the class, and both were masterpieces."[1]

Another pupil dwells on the gift which Ruskin's teaching showed for perceiving a feature, not immediately apparent, in an object, but which, secondary though it was, gave charm or character to the whole:—

"I was copying Turner's 'Mill near the Grande Chartreuse,' and Mr. Ruskin pointed out to me that I had made a rock too pointed in form. 'Look!' he said, sketching on the margin of my paper as he spoke; 'the rock is of that general form, with fissures in its sides, the water flows over its top and rounds that top, then runs down the clefts in its sides and wears away their edges, so that a certain roundness comes into the whole mass.' For a short time I leave off writing to look at this sketch, and I count the lines that compose it: thirty-eight lines, as nearly as I can make them out; they were done in about as many seconds, and the work is a splendid suggestion of a water-worn rock. Below it is a sketch of a tree, slighter and less expressive, but sufficient for the lesson which he gave me. He explained that my tree did not tell its own story sufficiently, and, as he sketched, pointed out that the tree would naturally have grown upright, but being on the side of a steep bank, it declined a little from the perpendicular; as it grew higher and became heavier from increase of branch and leafage, it declined still farther from the perpendicular, but the lower part of the trunk, being older and stronger than the upper part, was only a little out of the upright; as the branches grew, they naturally shot upward, those on the upper side of the trunk have a free course and grow fairly well, but those on the under side of the trunk fall over with it and droop more and more the nearer they are to the ground; as they near the top, they get a better chance and grow in a more normal fashion, whilst the forms of the masses of leafage on the two sides of the tree differ from

[1] "A Memorable Art Class," in *Good Words*, Aug. 1897, by Thomas Sulman (engraver of the wood-blocks in Augustus Hare's Works).

each other in consequence of this difference in the growth of the branches. All this history of a life, as shown in the form of a tree, astonished at the same time that it convinced me of its truth, as he spoke and illustrated his meaning by his sketch."[1]

Many of Ruskin's sketches made at the College are preserved, and there are few pieces from his hand of which a sympathetic collector would sooner possess an example. They show his decision of line, and they are memorials of his helpfulness. Yet for all his pains he felt that he was but an unprofitable servant. At the close of one of the terms at the College, two visitors went up to thank him for all the good that he was doing. "I shall never forget," says one of them, "the sad and wistful smile that came over his face as he turned a little away saying, 'Oh, do you think so? it seems to me as if I looked back only on a misspent life and wasted opportunities."[2]

To a Royal Commission in 1857 Ruskin described the object of his teaching at the College. "My efforts are directed," he said, "not to making a carpenter an artist, but to making him happier as a carpenter." But the native bent was sometimes too strong to be denied; while, on the other hand, Ruskin's encouragement may in other cases have led a man to overrate his powers or to abuse his master's generosity. The record of his classes is, however, a worthy one. Some names have been mentioned already, and others may be added. "George Allen as a mezzotint engraver, Arthur Burgess as a draughtsman and wood-cutter, John Bunney as a painter of architectural detail, W. Jeffrey as an artistic photographer, E. Cooke as a teacher, William Ward as a facsimile copyist, have all done work whose value deserves acknowledgment, all the more because it was not aimed at popular effect."[3] The class included all sorts and conditions of workers; and Ruskin had an idea, which he called his "Protestant Convent plan," of establishing a community of craftsmen, who were to carry out under

[1] "Recollections of Ruskin," by J. P. Emslie, in *The Working Men's College Journal*, 1908, pp. 322-328, 341-346.

[2] The Rev. Henry Solly, in *The Inquirer*, Feb. 10, 1900.

[3] W. G. Collingwood, *Life and Work of John Ruskin*, p. 155.

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modern conditions the labour of a mediæval *scriptorium*—bound together in some sort of brotherhood, and engaged in copying illuminated manuscripts, in making records of old pictures and buildings, and in other art-work. Nothing came of this plan at the time, though we shall hear in the next volume how in a different form Ruskin realised something of his idea.

With some of the pupils named above Ruskin became very closely attached. He devoted one of his latest essays[1] to the memory of Arthur Burgess, who, however, died at a comparatively early age. William Ward, who remained attached to Ruskin to the end, was the son of a commercial traveller (though also a man of mystical bent, and the author of several pamphlets), and was himself a clerk in the City of London. A friend had lent him *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and the book, he says, "came like a revelation." On hearing that its author was teaching a class at the Working Men's College, he promptly enrolled himself as a pupil in 1854; and so quickly was his latent artistic ability developed that already in 1856 Ruskin advised him to become a drawing-master. He did so, and Ruskin sent him many pupils. Somewhat later, he began the close study of Turner, by which, both as copyist and as collector and dealer, he became known to many lovers of art. Ruskin was constant in encouragement, in assistance, in praise; spent much pains in training Mr. Ward's skill as a copyist; and repeatedly called public attention to the value of his work.

George Allen, at the time when he began attending the classes at the College, was a joiner, in which capacity he was employed for some years upon the interior fittings of Dorchester House, Park Lane.[2] His skill is attested by the fact that when Morris and Rossetti founded their famous Firm, Allen was invited to become a partner and take charge of the Furniture Department. He was also offered an appointment in the household of Queen Victoria

[1] In *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* for 1887: reprinted in the Library Edition, vol. xiv. pp. 349–356.

[2] See *Munera Pulveris*, § 151.

as Superintendent of the furnishing of the Royal Palaces. These offers, however, he declined in order to devote himself entirely to Ruskin's service, in which he remained successively as general assistant, engraver, and publisher for fifty years. He had married the maid of Ruskin's mother, and he thenceforward became attached, in one capacity or another, to all Ruskin's varied undertakings. His progress at the Working Men's College had been rapid. On one occasion Mr. Allen was engaged with another pupil in copying an Albert Dürer, and Ruskin wrote: "By examining these two drawings together the student will, I hope, learn to appreciate the delicacy of touch involved in fine carpentry, for it was simply the transference to the pen and pencil of the fine qualities of finger that had been acquired by handling the carpenter's tools that I obtained results at once of this extreme precision; in each case, of course, the innate disposition for art having existed."[1] Ruskin presently encouraged Mr. Allen to specialise in the art of engraving, which he studied under J. H. Le Keux, the engraver of many of the finest plates in *Modern Painters*, and Lupton, who engraved some of the original *Liber* plates for Turner. In engraving Ruskin's work, Mr. Allen was keenly observant of any subtle gradations, and always carefully recorded any concentrated darks or lights—a characteristic charm, he used to say, in Ruskin's drawings. Of the original illustrations in *Modern Painters*, three were from drawings by Mr. Allen; he also engraved three plates for the edition of 1888, and in all executed ninety other plates for Ruskin. Many of his studies are included among the examples in the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford; and he is one of three or four assistants whose work has often been mistaken for Ruskin's.

With many working-men or young art-students, not directly connected with the College, Ruskin found time, in the midst of his intensely laborious life, to maintain correspondence or acquaintance. Among them was Mr. J. J. Laing. He was a young Scottish architect, who had

[1] *Catalogue of the Rudimentary Series*, 1878, No. 241 (Library Edition, vol. xxi. p. 287).

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written to Ruskin for assistance and advice. It is the tragedy of his short life that is told in Letter 9 of *Fors Clavigera*. He came up to London, as there described, to put himself under Ruskin; was employed by him as copyist; left for a while to enter an architect's office; returned to Ruskin's employment; wore himself out "in agony of vain effort," and died in 1862. A long series of letters to him has been printed. One extract must here suffice, as a type of the solicitude which Ruskin took for the welfare, moral and material, of the many young men who sought his advice:—

"FRIBOURG, *August 6th*, 1854.—DEAR MR. LAING,—I was indeed very glad, as you thought I should be, to have your long, chatty letter—one can never have letters too long when one is travelling—only some parts of said letter are founded on a little misapprehension of my meaning. I am sure I never said anything to dissuade you from trying to excel, or to do great things. I only wanted you to be sure your efforts were made with a substantial basis, so that just at the moment of push, your footing might not give way beneath you: and, also, I wanted you to feel that long and steady effort—made in a contented way—does more than violent efforts made for some strong motive, or under some enthusiastic impulse. And I repeat, for of this I am perfectly sure, that the *best* things are only to be done in this way. It is very difficult thoroughly to understand the difference between indolence and *reserve* of strength—between apathy and serenity—between palsy and patience. But there is all the difference in the world, and nearly as many men are ruined by inconsiderate exertion as by idleness itself. To do as much as you can healthily and happily do each day, in a well determined direction, with a view to far-off results, and with present enjoyment of one's work, is the only proper, the only eventually profitable way. I find scattered through your letter some motives which you have no business to act upon at all—'that I may show those of my own blood that they may be proud of me,' 'if for nothing else than to show my prejudiced folks that I could do something,' are by no means sufficient reasons for going into the life class. I am afraid of this prize-getting temper in you: chiefly, I suppose, because I have suffered much from it myself. . . . Though

I see you act under the influence of many good and noble motives, wishing to keep and comfort your mother and to do good to your fellow creatures, yet it seems to me that you do not quite know how inexpressibly subtle and penetrating the principle of pride is: how it mingles itself with, and even pretends itself to be, and takes the likeness of, the noblest feelings in the world; and what a constant struggle it needs even to detect, much more to expel it. It is like oxygen in iron—the hottest fire will not expel it altogether; and it steals in with the very air we breathe, turning all our steel into rust. Therefore it is that I urge on you the consideration of what I know to be true—that it is not by any effort of which you can possibly be vain, that you will do great things. . . . If you are to do anything that is really glorious, and for which men will for ever wonder at you, you will do it as a duck quacks—because it is your nature to quack—when it rains. . . .

"You say you must work hard to keep you from evil. Will not hard *play* do as well? I don't think God has put any passions in the human frame which may not be subdued in a healthy manner as long as it is necessary to subdue them. I wish you would ask a clergyman about this. I would accept your promise with gratitude, if I thought that it would be safe for you to make it. But I believe there is no means of preserving rectitude of conduct and nobleness of aim but the Grace of God obtained by daily, almost hourly, waiting upon Him, and continued faith in His immediate presence. Get into this habit of thought, and you need make no promises. Come short of this and you will break them, and be more discouraged than if you had made none. The great lesson we have to learn in this world is to *give it all up*. It is not so much resolution as renunciation, not so much courage as resignation, that we need. He that has once yielded thoroughly to God will yield to nothing but God. As to the Missal, it is the first page, 3, 4 Genesis, that I would like. Mind you don't do it but at your leisure. I shall be delighted to see you in London."

V

For some years before the Working Men's College was started, Ruskin had been in the habit of giving drawing-lessons by letter. Many examples of the kind may be seen

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in the Library Edition of his Works. They were often illustrated by pen-sketches, and Ruskin would also send from his collection drawings and engravings for purposes of study. Such letters and examples were sent not only to personal friends, such as Clayton and Acland, but also to correspondents unknown to Ruskin otherwise than by their promising talent or desire to learn. The trouble which he would take in such cases is a most striking illustration of the eager desire to share his gifts and of the passion for teaching which possessed him. His advice was the more sought when his classes at the Working Men's College began to be talked about. He says of Rossetti, whom he had impressed into the same service, that "he was the only one of our modern painters who taught disciples for love of them." Ruskin's own position in the matter was also unique. He was by this time the acknowledged chief among contemporary writers on art; he was the only critic who had the will—perhaps also the only one who has been competent — to translate his principles into practice, and teach with the pencil and the brush the system which he advocated with the pen. He was appealed to by anxious students and amateurs, as also by official Commissions, as at once a writer and a practical teacher. It was in order to extend his influence in this direction, and to save his time by printing a "circular letter" to his correspondents, that he set himself during the winter of 1856–57 to write *The Elements of Drawing*. With the general public, this book had an immediate success, which has been steadily sustained. It was original in method; it treated a technical matter with rare simplicity of argument; and it illumined details by a constant reference to first principles. Among the arts which Ruskin here employs, to persuade or interest his readers, is one of which he became increasingly fond—namely, the suggestion of analogies. Sometimes they are introduced incidentally, with little further object perhaps than to give point and piquancy to a sentence or an illustration. But more often they are of set purpose, being intended not merely to arrest the reader's attention and stimulate his thought or

imagination, but also to connect artistic with moral laws, and to suggest an underlying harmony in the universe. The book is remarkable, too, for its combination of workmanlike attention to detail with the enunciation of great principles; as, for instance, in the discussion of composition. Simple and elementary though it is in some respects, it is yet pre-eminently "a full book." I may refer, for instance, to the wealth of instruction — given, as it were, by the way, and consigned to a footnote (§ 5)—upon the distinction between rendering what you see, and what you know to be there. The truth that Ruskin there condenses into the happy phrase—"the innocence of the eye"—lies at the root of the philosophy of drawing, and may thus be called elementary, but it has never been so pointedly and so clearly expressed.

To the student of Ruskin's style *The Elements of Drawing* is of special interest. Those who examine his style in the light of his whole literary production will be struck by nothing more than its admirable flexibility. He wrote about everything, and in all his books, no doubt, there are some characteristics of his genius which may always be traced. But he had as many manners as he had audiences; there were as many notes within his range as there were effects at which to aim. This is an aspect of Ruskin as a man of letters which is sometimes missed by those who know him perhaps only by one book. An eminent critic has pleaded for "an epoch of a quieter style," and has instanced Ruskin (with Carlyle and Macaulay) among the giants in prose, who have "the rights of giants," but whose splendid excesses are bad examples.[1] But Ruskin, too, had a quiet style. He is a master not only of pomps and diapasons, but also of simplicity and limpid ease. In this simpler style *The Elements of Drawing* is a masterpiece. "The words are now so exact and so illuminous," wrote at the time a critic not always friendly to the author, "that they fall like lightning to destroy or illumine."[2]

[1] "On the Study of Literature," in Lord Morley's *Studies in Literature* (1891).

[2] The *Athenæum*, July 11, 1857.

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Nothing is harder to explain than technicalities of the arts; and nowhere is Ruskin more simple and intelligible.

The method of work adopted both in *The Elements of Drawing*, and in Ruskin's classes at the Working Men's College, has often been misunderstood. The book, it should be said, follows in the main the system as taught by the author at the College, with such modifications as the absence of a master rendered desirable. The misunderstanding of the system appears very clearly in a criticism of *The Elements of Drawing* by William Bell Scott, to which Ruskin replied in a letter first reprinted in *Arrows of the Chace*. Scott was master in the Government School of Design at Newcastle, and afterwards an examiner in the art schools at South Kensington. Ruskin's class at the Working Men's College and his text-book were intended as a practical protest against certain phases and ideas in the current teaching of the time. But they were not intended as a complete substitute for all other methods and agencies. He neither desired nor attempted to make artists or professional designers. Scott's criticisms fell wide of the mark from a misunderstanding on these points. Scott complained, that pupils who studied under Ruskin's system at the Working Men's College did not attain the same facility in designing for the manufacturers that rewarded the students of other systems. The reply is that Ruskin never promised them any such proficiency. Scott complained, again, that Ruskin's system included no drawing from the antique; that "etching with a pen from lichenous sticks" was not a sufficient education in drawing; and that adherence to Ruskin's exercises never had made an artist and never would. The reply is that Ruskin never said, or supposed that it would. He always urged young people intending to study art as a profession to enter the Academy Schools. His object was not to instruct professional artists, but to show how the elements of drawing might best be made a factor in general education. What he claimed for his system was that it was calculated to teach refinement of perception; to train the eye in close observation of natural beauties and the hand in delicacy of manipulation; and thus to help his

pupils to understand what masterly work meant, and to recognise it when they saw it. His original Memorandum, written for the information of students intending to join his drawing-class at the College, was fortunately preserved by Dr. Furnivall:—

"The teacher of landscape drawing wishes it to be generally understood by all his pupils that the instruction given in his class is not intended either to fit them for becoming artists, or in any direct manner to advance their skill in the occupations they at present follow. They are taught drawing, primarily in order to direct their attention accurately to the beauty of God's work in the material universe; and secondarily that they may be enabled to record, with some degree of truth, the forms and colours of objects when such record is likely to be useful. . . ."

Rossetti thought highly of Ruskin's methods. "Ruskin's class," he wrote (Jan. 23, 1855), "has progressed astonishingly and I must try to keep pace with him."[1] He sought to encourage habits of observation rather than mere facility of hand, and to fix the pupil's attention on natural objects rather than on "nonsense lines." In these respects Ruskin's methods have had considerable influence. Even the "lichenous stems," which aroused W. B. Scott's contemptuous ire, have been adopted in some official quarters. The Home Office has recently taken over from the old Science and Art Department the teaching of drawing in the Reformatory and Industrial Schools. The officials responsible for the work do not suppose that they will succeed in turning all their reformed hooligans into artists, but their syllabus shows that they hope to teach the clumsy-fingered lads what deftness of handling means, and to arouse in them, perhaps, some appreciation of the delicacy of natural forms. Among the drawing-copies is included Ruskin's study of an oak spray.[2] Another fruitful result of *The Elements of Drawing* may be mentioned. Ruskin was the first to point out the advantages of the

[1] *Letters to William Allingham*, p. 98.

[2] "The Dryad's Toil," Plate 51 in *Modern Painters*. See the *Drawing Syllabus for Guidance in Home Office Schools*, 1903.

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Liber Studiorum of Turner as the best school of Landscape Art. In the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* he gave his analysis of the human motives in that work; in *The Elements* he first laid down a system of study from it. During his Professorship at Oxford he constantly recurred to the subject, and impressed upon his pupils the importance of patient study from the *Liber*. Such study is now a recognised part of the "South Kensington" system. Sir Frank Short, when a student at the South Kensington Art Schools, copied some of the plates in the *Liber*, as recommended by Ruskin in *The Elements of Drawing*:—

"Already an accomplished artist and etcher, his progress in acquiring facility in mezzotint-engraving was rapid, and he soon produced successful copies of some of the plates. All this coming to the knowledge of Mr. Ruskin, he was much interested, visited Mr. Short in his studio, and told him that there was 'a great future for landscape mezzotint-engraving, which, in its highest development, had only been foreshadowed by the early men.' He also said to Mr. Short, in his characteristic way, 'Take care of your eyes, and your lungs, and your stomach, and stick to it.' Mr. Short subsequently engraved, in facsimile, a number of the plates in such a manner as to call forth high praise from Mr. Ruskin, and admiration from every connoisseur of the *Liber*."

The result was that Mr. Short was commissioned by the Science and Art Department to prepare, as a volume in "The South Kensington Drawing-Book," *A Selection from the Liber Studiorum: a Drawing-Book suggested by the writings of Mr. Ruskin*. This was published in 1890: "it aims at placing a selection of the most noted of these works, for practical instruction, within the reach of every Art School in the kingdom, and through the medium of the Government system of Art Prizes, within the grasp of any clever young student." Thus after many years has been realised one of the objects which Ruskin had most at heart in writing *The Elements of Drawing*. Through his friend, Professor Norton, Ruskin was instrumental also, it may be added, in making the *Liber Studiorum* better known in America. In 1874 Professor Norton delivered a

series of lectures on Turner's Works, and in the same year the Cambridge University Press (U.S.A.) published a *Catalogue of the Plates of Turner's Liber Studiorum: with an Introduction and Notes.* The text of this volume consists almost entirely of extracts from Ruskin's writings on the subject.

The Elements of Drawing has been widely read in America, it has been translated into German, and also into Italian—thus returning, as may in a certain sense be said, to its country of origin. Ruskin remarks of his system of teaching that, though "at variance with the practice of all recent European academy schools," it was yet founded on that of Leonardo. "I think," he said in his Inaugural Address as Professor at Oxford, "you need not fear being misled by me if I ask you to do only what Leonardo bids"; and indeed the similarity of teaching in the *Treatise on Painting* and *The Elements of Drawing* is often very marked, as Ruskin's Italian editor has been at pains to show.

The Elements of Perspective followed *The Elements of Drawing* after a space of two years. To the study of theoretical perspective Ruskin attached little importance in art-education; the essential thing was to cultivate in practice precision of observation, and this he sought to inculcate by other exercises. But the theory of perspective was a favourite study of his own; some of his earliest essays were concerned with it. Accordingly he set himself in 1859 to complete his text-book of elementary drawing by a companion volume on the elements of perspective. The book is not, and could not have been, light reading. Ruskin attained, however, in it a considerable measure of lucidity, and its mastery is certainly not more difficult than that of Euclid. He was fond of pure geometry, and in the reduction of the elements of perspective to a series of propositions in Euclid's manner he found congenial recreation. The book was written during a holiday in the country.

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The publication of *The Elements of Drawing* widened, in its turn, the circle of his pupils. He received in increasing number requests for advice and assistance in the practice of drawing. Such requests came both from humble students, otherwise unknown to him, and from great ladies. Among workmen who sought his aid in this way was Thomas Dixon, the cork-cutter at Sunderland, to whom he afterwards addressed the letters which form the volume entitled *Time and Tide*. When he had not the time to give personal and continuous instruction, he would put his correspondents in communication with one or other of his assistants—Mr. William Ward or Mr. George Allen—and would himself pay an occasional visit or write a letter of advice and encouragement. But in some cases the pupils who sought his advice became personal friends. At Wallington, he gave lessons to Miss Stewart Mackenzie, then about to marry Lord Ashburton.[1] Among other amateurs who set much store by his advice and instructions were Charlotte, Countess Canning, and her sister Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford. "I enclose a nice letter from Lady Waterford," he writes to his father (August 6, 1858): "the sketch of the St. Catherine of which she speaks is one I asked her to do for me of a pet figure of mine at Venice." Ruskin greatly admired the work of both sisters. "I had just got your portfolio back from Clanricarde," writes Lady Stuart de Rothesay (October 5, 1858) to her daughter, Lady Canning, "when Ruskin came to visit Somers. I hardly expected him to appreciate your bold flowers, and only showed him a few specimens, but he was in raptures, and said they were the grandest representations of flowers he had ever seen. . . . He had expended his admiration, I suppose, for when Somers showed his own exhibition, he was captious and said, 'You copy nature too closely! It

[1] *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott*, 1892, vol. ii. p. 12.

is the place itself! they are *views*, not *pictures*.'"[1] A few days later (November 3, 1858), Lady Stuart de Rothesay adds: "He begs to be allowed to see some more of your flowers, and he mentions having 'got Lady Waterford's Charity Girl to look at—She's stunning!' I told Loo this, and she hates the word so much, she would infinitely have preferred abuse."[2] Abuse, Lady Waterford could never have received from Ruskin; but his admiration for her rare talent was tempered with chastening advice. "I am getting on with a fresco," she writes from Ford Castle (March 21, 1864), "which, thanks to Mr. Ruskin's useful critique, I am making of a much warmer colour"; and again (Sept. 22, 1864), "Ruskin condemned (very justly) my frescoes, and has certainly spirited me up to do better."[3] He was a stimulating, if an exacting critic, and he remained on terms of friendship with Lady Waterford till her death in 1891.

Another friendship formed through Ruskin's repute as an art-teacher left a deeper impress upon his life. Among Lady Waterford's friends was Mrs. La Touche of Harristown, Kildare, in which county Mr. La Touche occupied a position of importance. Lady Waterford had introduced Ruskin to Mrs. La Touche in London, and presently she, with her daughter Rose, paid a visit to Denmark Hill. "I have too long delayed," wrote Mrs. La Touche (Feb. 1858), "thanking you, in my own name and Rose's, for the pleasant hours we spent last Thursday. You, who live with and for Art, will not easily guess how much enjoyment you afforded to me who am wholly unaccustomed to such an atmosphere—out

[1] *The Story of Two Noble Lives*, by Augustus J. C. Hare, 1893, vol. ii. p. 478.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 479. Ruskin's use of the word "stunning" reflects his intercourse with Dante Rossetti, in whose circle "stunning" and "stunner" were the favourite terms of admiration. In a letter to his mother (July 1, 1855) Rossetti wrote: "An astounding event is to come off to-morrow. The Marchioness of Waterford has expressed a wish to Ruskin to see me paint in water-colour, as she says my method is inscrutable to her. She is herself an excellent artist, and would have been really great, I believe, if not born such a swell and such a stunner" (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti: his Family Letters*, 1859, vol. ii. p. 140).

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. pp. 251, 254

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of Dreamland. The 'Val d'Aosta,' and the Rossetti, and some of the Turners have been before me ever since. Rose was very eloquent about them on the way home; she will not forget them, and will refer to them in memory hereafter with better understanding of their meaning." The letter, which is printed in the Memoir of Mrs. La Touche, goes on to discuss the beauties of London sunsets and of the Atlantic coasts in Ireland. It is the letter of a clever woman and of a close reader of Ruskin's books. "Extremely pretty still, herself," Ruskin says of her, in describing their first meeting; "not at all too old to learn many things; but mainly anxious about her children. . . . Named, by her cleverest and fondest friend, 'Lacerta'—to signify that she had the grace and wisdom of the serpent, without its poison." Rose, the second daughter, was nine years old on January 3, 1858:—

"Neither tall nor short for her age; a little stiff in her way of standing. The eyes rather deep blue at that time, and fuller and softer than afterwards. Lips perfectly lovely in profile;—a little too wide, and hard in edge, seen in front; the rest of the features what a fair, well-bred Irish girl's usually are; the hair, perhaps, more graceful in short curl round the forehead, and softer than one sees often, in the close-bound tresses above the neck. . . ."

Ruskin at the time was nearly forty; they were half a life asunder:—

"'I thought you *so* ugly,' she told me, afterwards. She didn't quite mean that; but only, her mother having talked much of my 'greatness' to her, she had expected me to be something like Garibaldi, or the Elgin Theseus; and was extremely disappointed."

The mother, admiring Ruskin, knowing his kindness, and desiring to have the gifts of her daughters rightly developed, begged that he would take an interest in their education. He consented gladly, and was made free of their schoolroom in Norfolk Street. And thus began the romance, and the tragedy, of Ruskin's life.

CHAPTER XX

ART CENSOR

(1855–1859)

"Poem by a Perfectly Furious Academician.

I takes and paints,
Hears no complaints,
And sells before I'm dry;
Till savage Ruskin
He sticks his tusk in,
Then nobody will buy.

N.B.—Confound Ruskin; only that won't come into poetry —but it's true."—*Punch.*

The vogue of Ruskin's books on art, and his wide circle of friends, pupils, and admirers, naturally led to frequent appeals for his opinion on current works of art. His private diaries and letters show that he was constantly being asked by amateurs for advice as to what they should buy; and a chief object of his books was to teach disciples what they should admire. A series of *Academy Notes*, begun in 1855 and continued annually until 1859, was thus undertaken to serve as a kind of "circular letter," telling people "the pictures in the Exhibitions of the year which appear to me most interesting, either in their good qualities or in their failure." The later Notes included the principal water-colour exhibitions, and the French Gallery, as well as the Royal Academy. The Notes were intended also as particular criticisms designed to support and illustrate general statements in Ruskin's works. The success of his letters to the *Times* on the Pre-Raphaelites (1851), in stemming the tide of hostile criticism against the young school, probably suggested to him the more regular and methodical exercise

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of his now considerable authority. "I do not at all care," he wrote in a letter of 1854 to Dr. Furnivall, "for reputation in the matter. I *must* speak if I see people thinking what I know is wrong, and if there is any chance of my being listened to. I don't say I wouldn't care for reputation if I had it, but until people are ready to receive all I say about Art as 'unquestionable,' just as they receive what Faraday tells them about Chemistry, I don't consider myself to have any reputation at all worth caring about." It was as one claiming authority that Ruskin wrote his *Academy Notes*. "Twenty years of severe labour," he said, "devoted exclusively to the study of the principles of Art, have given me the right to speak on the subject with a measure of confidence." He exercised the right boldly; his criticisms were fearless and trenchant. They may be described from this point of view as a revival in prose form of the *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians* which Dr. Wolcot, writing as Peter Pindar, had put out seventy years before (1782–86). Ruskin showed no respect for names merely as names. He abased, so far as in him lay, some of the proud: he exalted many who were at the time of no reputation. "He does not condescend," wrote a reviewer, by way of reducing the Notes *ad absurdum*, "to notice Mr. Hart; but sees a future of good in Mr. Leighton." Time has in both cases vindicated Ruskin's criticism. In 1855 Leighton (then twenty-five years of age) exhibited the picture, now in the Royal Collection, of "Cimabue's Madonna carried in procession through the streets of Florence." Ruskin gave a long notice of the picture, extolling its beauty and defending it against certain technical criticisms, but adding some others of his own. The importance which he thus attached to the picture induced Browning to take the young artist to see Ruskin, and much friendly intercourse followed. Leighton was one of the young painters who had taken to heart the injunction given to them in the first volume of *Modern Painters;* the preparation for an historical painter must be, he felt, the faithful study of nature.[1] He valued highly, as his letters

[1] See his citation of Ruskin's words in a letter of 1853 (*Life of Lord Leighton*, vol. i. p. 109).

show, Ruskin's criticism of his pictures, though modestly disclaiming the more enthusiastic of the praise. Ruskin had written in 1864 of "the development of what he calls 'enormous power and sense of beauty.'" Leighton did not deny that he had some sense of beauty, but "I *have not*," he wrote, "and *never shall have* enormous power." Ruskin was "in one of his queer moods," he writes at an earlier time (1861), "when he came to breakfast with me—he spent his time looking at my portfolio and praised my drawings most lavishly—*he did not even look at the pictures.* However, nothing could be more cordial than he is to me."

Not all the painters whom Ruskin selected for notice won renown; but looking over these Notes after half a century has elapsed, the reader will be struck, as Mr. Collingwood has observed, by the shrewdness with which Ruskin "put his finger upon the weak points of the various artists, and no less upon their strong points"; and will remark "how many of the men he praised as beginners have risen to eminence, how many he blamed have sunk from a specious popularity into oblivion. . . . The men who laid their failure to his account were the weaklings whom he urged to attempts beyond their powers, with kindly support misconstrued into a prophecy of success."[1]

It was a main object of the Notes to encourage and trace the growth of the Pre-Raphaelite influence. In whatever respects British art after 1855 showed an advance in sincerity of purpose and thoroughness of study, much of the credit is due to the criticisms of Ruskin which at once inspired or confirmed the painters and directed the taste of the public. A considerable portion of *Academy Notes* is devoted to Millais, whose genius Ruskin was the first to proclaim, and never ceased to acknowledge, though he felt impelled to blame what he considered signs of some falling away on the artist's part from the ideals of his youth. This was in the *Notes* for 1857, in which Ruskin, in noticing "Sir Isumbras at the Ford" and "The Escape of a Heretic," exhorted Millais to "return to quiet perfectness of work." Millais bitterly resented this criticism, and believed it to be

[1] *Life and Work of John Ruskin*, 1900, p. 162.

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inspired by personal motives.[1] The facts negative such a supposition. Ruskin's notices of Millais's pictures in 1855 and 1856 were enthusiastic. In 1859 he repeated his warning of 1857, but extolled the artist's "mighty painting." Millais's criticism of his critic at this period is interesting: "Ruskin will be disgusted this year, for all the rubbish he has been praising before being sent into the Royal Academy has now bad places. There is a wretched work like a photograph of some place in Switzerland, evidently painted under his guidance, for he seems to have lauded it up sky-high; and that is *just where it is* in the miniature room! He does not understand my work, which is now too broad for him to appreciate, and I think his eye is only fit to judge the portraits of insects."[2] The "wretched work like a photograph" was Brett's Pre-Raphaelite landscape, "Val d'Aosta." It was not Ruskin who had changed his tone for unworthy personal motives; it was Millais who had changed his artistic methods. Nor is it true to say that Ruskin was incapable of understanding the broader brush-work of Millais. On the contrary, he expressed profound admiration for the free-hand painting of the master. What he found amiss was a certain slovenliness, as he deemed it, alike in conception and in treatment. And did not the artist himself show some premonition when he wrote in the older days, "People had better buy my pictures now, when I am working for fame, than a few years later, when I shall be married and working for a wife and children"? No one, it will be seen, was quicker than Ruskin to applaud, when towards the end of the artist's career he returned to the more poetical and imaginative themes of his youth. I recall a conversation which I had with Ruskin on the picture-shows of 1885—the year of Millais's "The Ornithologist, or the Ruling Passion." "There are only three things," said Ruskin, "worth looking at. One is Millais's big picture at the Academy—with the entirely noble old man and the noble young girl in front. The second is Briton Riviere's Stolen Kisses; and the third

[1] *Life and Letters of Millais*, vol. i. p. 323.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 342.

is a little drawing of Mrs. Allingham's at the Old Water-Colour Society. In all Millais's other pictures there is his scornful flinging of unfinished work; but there's never any denying his power. Whether he is good one year, or bad, he is always the most powerful of them all." "I have never seen any work of modern art with more delight and admiration than this," he wrote of the same picture; and of the Exhibition of Millais's Works at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1886 he said:—

"Looking back now on the painter's career—crowned as it has lately been by some of the best pieces of freehand painting in the world, I am more disposed to regret his never having given expression to his power of animal-painting, wholly unrivalled in its kind, than any of the shortcomings in his actual work.—J. R., 1886."

It was a signal merit of Ruskin's *Academy Notes* that he called attention year after year to pieces of modest and quiet landscape by painters then unknown, which might otherwise have escaped notice altogether. His encouragement gave the decisive impetus to Alfred Hunt; he detected and praised the beautiful and still too little known work of Inchbold; he was among the warmest, as among the earliest, admirers of J. C. Hook; his criticisms called attention to the pictures of Brett, and Boyce, and Knight, of Henry Moore, and of Mr. Raven and Mr. Whaite. Among foreign painters, Ruskin was the first to call attention in this country to the domestic idyls of Frère.

With some of the painters Ruskin sought friendship, in order that he might the better encourage and assist them. Thus in 1858 he spent some time in Switzerland with Inchbold, and in later years continued to befriend, and also play the master to, the artist. He gives, with a touch of humour not to be taken too literally, an account of all this in a letter to his father:—

"Turin, *August* 9 [1858].—The two little drawings of which you speak in my bedroom are Inchbold's; the cottage one, I chose and made him draw at Lauterbrunnen; the Thun, bought when he couldn't sell anything, to help him a little. It isn't good for

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much, but it is like a sweet Swiss evening. I wanted and ordered of him (paying him when he was at Chamouni last year) four more cottages; but he got entirely off the rails at Chamouni, and the cottages are failures. I stayed with him some time, or rather made him stay with me, at Bellinzona, in order to make him understand where he was wrong. He was vexed with his work and yet thought it was right, and didn't know why he didn't like it, nor why nobody liked it. It was a delicate and difficult matter to make him gradually find out his own faults (it's no use *telling* a man of them), and took me a fortnight of innuendoes. At last I think I succeeded in making him entirely uncomfortable and ashamed of himself, and then I left him."

So also Ruskin was for some years on terms of helpful friendship with Brett. The following letter of 1858 refers to the picture which Millais rejoiced to find "skied":—

"Turin, *August* 26.—I mentioned that Mr. Brett was with me at La Tour. He has been here a week to-day. I sent for him at Villeneuve, Val d'Aosta, because I didn't like what he said in his letter about his present work, and thought he wanted some lecturing like Inchbold: besides that, he could give me some useful hints. He is much tougher and stronger than Inchbold, and takes more hammering; but I think he looks more miserable every day, and have good hope of making him completely wretched in a day or two more—and then I shall send him back to his castle. He is living *in* that castle which I sketched so long ago in Val d'Aosta—Château St. Pierre."

Brett's picture was bought by Ruskin, and hung in the drawing-room at Herne Hill until his death.

In cases where Ruskin was not personally known to the painters, his criticisms often were no less powerful in suggestion, encouragement, or rebuke. For instance, at the beginning of the Notes for 1858 he had pointed out the beauty of the delicate pink of apple blossoms against the soft clear blue of a spring sky, and expressed his surprise that among all the modest and gentle beauties of nature which the new school had particularly made it their study to express, none of them should have chosen this. In the

exhibition of the following year, it was noticed that "three distinguished artists had set themselves the task in consequence." [1]

Of another criticism of Ruskin's—that in the Notes of 1858 on Carrick's "Weary Life"—a fine and touching incident is recorded. Ruskin was abroad at the time:—

"Vokins wished me to name to you," wrote his father (June 3, 1858), "that Carrick, when he read your criticism on 'Weary Life,' came to him with the cheque Vokins had given, and said your remarks were all right, and that he could not take the price paid by Vokins, the buyer; he would alter the picture. Vokins took back the money, only agreeing to see the picture when it was done."

II

Such anecdotes illustrate the interest which Ruskin's criticisms excited, and the influence which they exerted. "Mr. Ruskin's authoritative Notes," wrote a reviewer in 1858, "are now looked anxiously for by a number of ductile people, as something dogmatic and decisive, from which there is no appeal. . . . Besides, Mr. Ruskin's trenchant self-assertion of censorship creates a sort of tumult among artists, which is caught up and echoed by people out of doors, and enjoyed with all the zest of a scandal." [2] It was not, however, only "trenchant self-assertion" that gave influence to his Notes. He wrote with authority, but he gave chapter and verse for it, and his criticisms were such as appealed to artists, as well as to the general public. It is sometimes said that Ruskin showed no knowledge or appreciation of pictures as

[1] Namely, Millais in his "Spring," J. C. Horsley in "Blossom-time," and Mr. Hughes in "The King's Orchard" (*Economist*, May 28, 1859). So in another critique we read: "Ruskin has much to answer for. Probably such an avalanche of misconception and untruth was never let loose on the patient art-loving, nature-loving wanderer before. From Millais (who paints blossoms as big as babies' heads, growing on trees in full leaf) down to the sorriest scrub who seeks a teacher's certificate from the Department of Art, all appear to have taken the apple-blossom fever, and to have painted the blossoms when at the height of their delirium."

[2] *The Leader*, May 22, 1858.

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pictures, that he cared only for meaning and not at all for method, that he judged art from a purely literary standard. This view can only be entertained by those whose knowledge of Ruskin's works is partial or superficial; it is completely traversed by the criticisms in *Academy Notes*.[2] In the *Notes on Prout and Hunt*, of a later date, Ruskin reaffirms a principle which he had often previously asserted—that "interest in the story of a picture does not in the least signify a relative interest in the art of painting," and that the first thing needful in these matters is "to understand what painting is as mere painting." Ruskin's critics may say, if they like, that the technical standards he applied were mistaken; to say that he applied none at all is to state what is simply not the case. It is amusing to find that at the time when these critiques on the Academy appeared, the objection taken to them in the press was that they were too technical, and not sufficiently "literary." Thus one of the critics, in noticing the pamphlet of 1856, cites Ruskin's remarks about Holman Hunt's "Light of the World"—that "no one could sympathise more with the general feeling in it," but that "unless it had been accompanied with perfectly good nettle painting" he would never have praised it; and then continues, "Let any one realise his own state of mind if he believed the Light of the World to be, indeed, before him; and if he thinks in that Blessed Presence he could have any eye for nettles, he will tolerate Mr. Ruskin's criticism, admire the temper of his mind, and think him a sound art critic: not otherwise."[3] So, again, another reviewer complained of Ruskin for making technical objections to a picture by Egg which was "so full of pointed narrative."[4]

[1] See, for instance, a lecture on Ruskin delivered at the Royal Academy by Mr. Val Prinsep, R.A., and reported in the *Westminster Gazette* of January 20, 1903.

[2] See, for instance, to the note on Herbert's "King Lear" (1855): criticism of that microscopic and technical character is not the work of a merely literary judge. Or consider the criticism of Roberts's "Duomo at Milan" (1857); or that of Maclise's "Peter the Great" (1857): these are the observations of a student of nature and a sketcher.

[3] *The Guardian*, July 16, 1856.

[4] The *Art Journal*, August 1855, p. 238.

In this connexion it is interesting to remark how in these Notes, as in other writings of the same or later date, Ruskin uses musical analogies to enforce his points. Thus in discussing the system of light and shade in a water-colour drawing by Fripp, he remarks that "treble notes must not be sharp and thin; the higher they are the more tender they must be, and in a certain sense the richer; it is the rich trebles that are sweet and precious." In the *Elements of Drawing* (1856), and again in *The Two Paths* (1858), he constantly turns to music in order to illustrate artistic points, in the criticism of painting, which are best, or only, to be understood in terms of the sister art. Those who imagine that Ruskin had no eye for the subtler harmonies of pictures as pictures would do well to consider these passages and to compare with them what he says about the essentially "decorative" art of Albert Moore (1875).

Ruskin's annual Notes attracted, then, much attention; and *Punch*, reflecting the public opinion of the day, published the "Poem by a Perfectly Furious Academician" which I have placed at the head of this chapter. The Notes were, as an artist of the time bears witness, "eagerly looked for and as eagerly purchased."[1] Artists, as we know, "never read criticisms," but they somehow discover what the critics say. The pleasure of some who were favourably noticed, the wrath of those who were severely handled or (perhaps worse still) not mentioned at all, may be traced in several memoirs of the period. Men who had Ruskin's ear took measures to induce him to notice unregarded merit. The bitterness of those who dissented from his opinions may be judged from the tone of a criticism of the first number of *Academy Notes* in the *Quarterly Review*. Ruskin was therein accused of "a cold and hardened habit," "an unfeeling heart," and of "malice, bitterness, and uncharitableness"; and covert allusions were introduced to his personal affairs.[2] In a lighter vein were various skits, in pen and

[1] *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, by H. S. Marks, R.A., 1894, vol. ii. p. 163.

[2] The writer of this Review was Lady Eastlake, wife of the P.R.A., whose pictures had been criticised in the Notes. (See *Letters and Journals of Lady Eastlake*, vol. ii. p. 82.)

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pencil, prose and verse, which the Notes inspired. The skits were sometimes shown to Ruskin, and he enjoyed them. Among the authors of such skits was H. S. Marks, R.A., who owed to his parody of the Notes for the year 1856 a subsequent friendship with Ruskin. "The Notes for the year 1856 I made the subject," he says, "of a little skit, with coloured caricatures of the pictures, and parodies of Mr. Ruskin's style in writing and critical views. I bound the few pages roughly together, for the thing never got beyond manuscript form. . . . At some gathering of artists Woolner told me that he had mentioned my brochure to Mr. Ruskin, who immediately expressed a wish to see it. I posted it to him the next morning, with an explanatory line or two, which was promptly acknowledged by the great writer, who thanked me for sending him the Notes, 'and still more for the compliment of you knowing I should enjoy them.'"[1] Sir Edward Hamley also wrote a skit on "Mr. Dusky's" Notes, and Ruskin had moreover many imitators as well as parodists.

But the frankness of his criticisms was not appreciated or understood. Ruskin did not allow his personal feelings to lead him either to hostile or to favourable prejudice. He played the part of Minos with severe impartiality: "strictly examining the crimes" of all who entered the Academy. He had, as he claimed, the right to speak with authority; but it must be confessed that he sometimes spoke also with arrogance. As, for instance, in the passage added to the first number, where he says that when he has attacked a picture it will hereafter be found that "the worst policy which the friends of the artist can possibly adopt will be to defend it." Nor can it have been any comfort to artists thus attacked to learn that he never said half what he could say in dispraise. Among the artists thus chastened was David Roberts, R.A. "Feeling, perhaps," says an Academician with much sympathy, "that Roberts might find it difficult to reconcile an attempt to do him a serious injury with the usual interpretation of the term friendship, the critic wrote a private note to the artist, explaining his action

[1] *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, by H. S. Marks, R.A., vol. ii. p. 164.

on the hypothesis of a self-imposed duty to the public, and concluded his note by the expression of a hope that severe criticism would not interfere with the sincere feeling of friendship which the writer hoped would always exist," etc., etc. To this Roberts replied that the first time he met the critic he would give him a *sound thrashing;* and he ventured to "hope that a broken head would not interfere with the sincere feeling of friendship which he hoped would always exist," etc., etc.[1] "D—— the fellow," exclaimed one young artist, "why doesn't he back his friends?"

III

After 1859 the Notes were suspended. "Thenceforward," Ruskin explained, "it seemed to me useless, so far as artists were concerned, to continue criticism which they would esteem dishonourable unless it was false."[2] In 1875, however, the publication of *Academy Notes* was resumed for that year only, and only the Exhibition of the Royal Academy itself was noticed. Ruskin had, on a first inspection, been so much pleased with some of the pictures of the year that he determined to write "an entirely good-humoured sketch" of modern English painting. In this resolve, he found it impossible to persevere; it was much more nearly achieved eight years later in the Oxford course of lectures on *The Art of England.* Further inspection of the Exhibition made it appear typical to him of tendencies in modern life and thought which it was his prerogative to chastise. It was in this mood that, in writing to Mr. Wedderburn, he said, "The R. A. Exhibition is so important that I must write a 'Notes' upon it as I used to do." After all, whatever theories of their function may be entertained by artists, their work cannot but be in a measure both didactic and historical; didactic, in that for good or evil it stimulates the fancy or directs the thoughts of spectators;

[1] *My Autobiography and Reminiscences*, by W. P. Frith, R.A., 1887, vol. i. p. 128.

[2] Preface to the *Notes* of 1875.

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historical, in that it corresponds to the feelings and interests of the time. It was from this point of view that Ruskin found the Exhibition of 1875 particularly instructive, and this explains the different form into which his Notes were now thrown. He did not take the reader round the rooms in order, but grouped the notable pictures under various heads according to their subject-matter. That he enjoyed his work, and was satisfied with "the devil" he put into it, appears from one of the familiar letters to his bookseller-friend, Mr. F. S. Ellis: "There's a nice spicy flavour in it now, I think—as a whole—quite a 'loving cup' for the Academy." And in a similar vein he wrote to Mr. Allen, "These *Academy Notes* will have some sting in them at any rate; they have cost me dreadful trouble." Just as in Carlyle, the judicious reader makes some mental allowance for the sardonic humour of that artist in vituperation, so Ruskin's work will never be rightly understood except by those who remember that there was in him, and especially in his later writings, a certain element of elfish humour.

CHAPTER XXI

TURNER'S EXECUTOR

(1851–1852, 1856–1858, 1861–1862, 1881)

> "The account of gain and loss, of gifts and gratitude, between Turner and his countrymen, was for ever closed. *He* could only be left to his quiet death at Chelsea,—the sun upon his face ; *they*, to dispose a length of funeral through Ludgate, and bury, with threefold honour, his body in St. Paul's, his pictures at Charing Cross, and his purposes in Chancery."—*Preface* to *Modern Painters*, vol. iii.

LETTERS, catalogues, notes and reports upon Turner's Bequest to the British Nation occupied a large part of Ruskin's time and thought during the years 1856–58; in the present chapter a connected account is given of this branch of his life's work.

I

Turner died on the 19th of December 1851. Ruskin was at Venice at the time, at work upon *The Stones of Venice*. His father at once sent the news to him, and he replied as follows :—

"*December* 28, 1851.—I received your letter some hours ago, telling me of the death of my earthly Master. I was quite prepared for it, and am perhaps more relieved than distressed by it—though saddened. It will not affect my health, nor alter my arrangements. The sorrow which did me harm was past when I first saw that his mind had entirely failed ; but I hope I shall have another letter from you soon, for I cannot tell by this whether it has yet been ascertained that his portfolio is safe or whether—of which I lived in continual dread—he has destroyed anything. I shall not enter into any particulars about pictures to-night—being Sunday—but merely sit down to acknowledge your letter. For *one* thing I

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was not altogether prepared—the difference of feeling with which one now looks at the paper touched by his hand—the sort of affection which it obtains as that on which something of his life remains. I have the *Farnley*—as you the *Rigi*—beside me, perhaps the most touching picture of the two now; I think it more beautiful than I ever did before."

The contents of Turner's will had not yet reached him, and Ruskin supposed that the master's portfolios would come into the market. His first concern, therefore, was to write to his father with instructions of what he was to buy:—

"*Monday morning* [*December* 29].—I slept very well, only waking early. I feel it a little more than I thought I should, however—everything in the sunshine and the sky so talks of him. Their Great Witness lost. . . .

"Touching pictures—the first and most important of all are the original sketches of my St. Gothard and Goldau; and, if possible, the original sketches of all the Swiss drawings we have. . . . These sketches are in such *pure* thin water-colour that you may crumple them like bank-notes, without harm. There are, I know, unless he has destroyed them, a vast quantity, for which the *public* won't care a farthing. It is just possible that for five or six hundred pounds you might secure the whole mass of them—getting them for from three to four guineas each, or even less. I don't mean all his sketches, but *all his Swiss sketches since 1841*. . . . I understand the meaning of these sketches, and I can work them up into pictures in my head, and reason out a great deal of the man from them which I cannot from the drawings. Besides, no one else will value them, and I should like to show what they are. By-the-bye, Griffith mentioned some of Fribourg, which I have never seen—very fine; please try to see these, and do try to get some of those above mentioned: I have been so often disappointed about these sketches that I feel as if there were some fatality in them."

Ruskin was again, and in a double sense, to be disappointed. The sketches and drawings left by Turner were not to pass into the possession of his disciple and interpreter, and they were to be treated with scanty respect by those whose

property they became. But all this was not yet known by Ruskin, and his instructions to his father continued in many letters. A few days later Ruskin heard that he had been appointed an executor by Turner, and the contents of the will—with its bequest of pictures and drawings to the nation, and of the bulk of his other property to found a Charitable Institution for Decayed Artists—became known. There was no legacy to Ruskin, except of nineteen guineas to him (as also to each of the other executors) to buy a mourning ring. "Nobody can say you were paid to praise," wrote Ruskin's father; sending also an interesting description of Turner's house:—

"I have just been through Turner's house with Griffith. His labour is more astonishing than his genius. There are £80,000 of oil pictures, done and undone. Boxes, half as big as your study table, filled with drawings and sketches. There are copies of Liber Studiorum to fill all your drawers and more, and house walls of proof plates in reams—they may go at 1s. each. . . .

"Nothing since Pompeii so impressed me as the interior of Turner's house; the accumulated dust of forty years partially cleared off; daylight for the first time admitted by opening a window on the finest productions of art buried for forty years. The drawing-room has, it is reckoned, £25,000 worth of proofs, and sketches, and drawings, and prints. It is amusing to hear dealers saying there can be no Liber Studiorums—when I saw neatly packed and well labelled as many bundles of Liber Studiorum as would fill your entire bookcase, and England and Wales proofs in packed and labelled bundles like reams of paper, as I told you, piled nearly to ceiling. . . .[1]

"The house must be as dry as a bone—the parcels were apparently quite uninjured. The very large pictures were spotted, but not much. They stood leaning, one against another, in the large low rooms. Some *finished* go to nation, many unfinished *not:* no frames. Two are given unconditional of gallery building—*very fine:* if (and

[1] The *Liber Studiorum* proofs did not ultimately pass to the nation, but remained the property of the next-of-kin. It is said that they were offered to Gambart, the dealer, for £10,000; but as he was not given an opportunity of inspecting them in detail, he declined the offer. They then were sent to auction, and fetched £30,000.

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this is a condition) *placed beside Claude*. The style much like the laying on in Windmill Lock in dealer's hands, which, now it is cleaned, comes out a real beauty. I believe Turner loved it. The will desires all to be framed and repaired, and put into the best showing state; as if he could not release his money to do this till he was dead. The top of his gallery is one ruin of glass and patches of paper, now only just made weather-proof. . . .

"I saw in Turner's rooms, *Geo. Morlands* and *Wilsons*, and *Claudes*, and *portraits* in various styles, *all by Turner*. He copied every man, was every man first, and took up his own style, casting all others away. It seems to me you may keep your money, and revel for ever and for nothing among Turner's Works."

Ruskin himself (January 1) confessed to being "at first a little pained at all the sketches being thus for ever out of my reach; yet I am so thoroughly satisfied and thankful for the general tenour of the will that I can well put up with my own loss. Indeed I shall gain as much as I lose—in the power of always seeing all his works in London, free of private drawing-rooms. If the rest of the executors would only make me curator of the gallery I should be perfectly happy." "I understand now" (January 6), he added, "his continual and curious hesitation in parting with a picture: he was always doubtful if he had money enough for his great purpose, and yet wanting to keep as many pictures together as possible." Ruskin was enthusiastic and eager to take up the duties and opportunities which seemed to be opening before him. He planned to leave his work at Venice and pay a flying visit to London. This idea, on second thoughts, he abandoned. His father pressed him to undertake a Life of Turner. This idea, also, on reflection, he abandoned; it would be work enough to plan and build and arrange and interpret the great Turner Gallery:—

"*5th January* [1852]. . . . I have been thinking about writing Turner's life, but have nearly made up my mind to let it alone, merely working in such bits of it as please me with *Modern Painters*. Biography is not in my way. Besides, I should be too long about it; there will be a dozen lives of him out before

mine would be ready. It would be curious if I got the whole collection of his works to illustrate, and explain, and build the gallery for—and so take the position of his Interpreter to future generations."

That position Ruskin was to hold, but not in the way he dreamed of. For it soon appeared that the will was to be contested. Ruskin did not think that the opposition would be serious; still less did it enter his head that all Turner's main purposes would be defeated. He made no doubt that the pictures would, in accordance with the painter's wish, be kept together, and that a Turner's Gallery would, as he directed, be built to receive them. The only question which seemed open to him was who should have the designing and ordering of the Gallery:—

"*January* 1 [1852]. . . . I hope and believe that the National Gallery people *won't* build a new wing, but will leave us to do it; and that it will be a year or two before it is begun, and that then I shall have the management of it—(this between you and me)—for I would build such a gallery as should set an example for all future picture galleries. I have had it in my mind for years. I would build it in the form of a labyrinth, all on ground storey, but with ventilation between floor and ground; in form of labyrinth, that in a small space I might have the gallery as long as I chose—lighted from above—opening into larger rooms like beads upon a chain, in which the larger pictures should be seen at their right distance, but *all on the line*, never one picture above another. Each picture with its light properly disposed for it alone—in its little recess or chamber. Each drawing with its own golden case and closing doors—with guardians in every room to see that these were always closed when no one was looking at *that* picture. In the middle of the room—glass cases with the sketches, if any, for the drawing or picture, and proofs of all engravings of it. Thus the mass of diffused interest would be so great that there would never be a crowd anywhere: no people jostling each other to see two pictures hung close together. Room for everybody to see everything. The roof of double plate-glass of the finest kind, sloping as in Crystal Palace, but very differently put together: no *drip*. £50,000 would

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do it all splendidly, and leave £30,000 for interest, for repairs, and servants' salaries."[1]

Ruskin was never to build this labyrinthine Turner Gallery. We most of us, said Goethe, begin life by conceiving magnificent buildings which we intend to erect, but we are satisfied at the close of life if we have cleared away a small portion of the ground. Ruskin's Turner Gallery, with its spacious dispositions for the due display of the artist's works in all sorts, was destined, no less than Turner's own gift to his profession, to be a Fallacy of Hope: but Ruskin was able, as we shall presently see, to do a great deal towards clearing away obstacles to the exhibition of a portion at least of the master's drawings.

The story of the last and saddest of all Turner's Fallacies of Hope belongs rather to the life of Turner than to that of Ruskin. But some account of the will and its codicils is necessary in order to explain Ruskin's part in the matter. The reader requires, moreover, to bear in mind the fate of Turner's bequest in perusing many passages of bitter irony or invective in Ruskin's works. The purposes which Turner had, at one time or another, in view in making his will were, roughly speaking, as follow:—

(1) He left various small legacies to his relatives and other persons intimately connected with him.

(2) He bequeathed to the National Gallery "the following pictures or paintings by myself, namely, *Dido Building Carthage*, and the picture formerly in the Tabley Collection . . . subject to, for, and upon the following reservations and restrictions only; that is to say, I direct that the said pictures or paintings shall be hung, kept, or placed, that is to say, Always between the two pictures painted by Claude, the Seaport and Mill."

(3) To the Royal Academy he bequeathed a sum of money for the purposes of a dinner on his birthday, of endowing a Professorship in Landscape, and of awarding

[1] When the will came to be proved, Turner's property was valued at £140,000.

[2] The Turners are Nos. 498 and 479 ("Sun rising in a mist") in the National Gallery; the Claudes, Nos. 14 and 12.

every two or three years a Turner's Gold Medal to the best landscape.

(4) "As to my finished Pictures, except the Two mentioned in my will, I give and bequeath the same unto the Trustees of the National Gallery, provided that a room or rooms are added to the present National Gallery, to be, when erected, called Turner's Gallery, in which such pictures are to be constantly kept, deposited, and preserved." In the meanwhile the whole contents of his house in Queen Anne Street (including therefore unfinished pictures as well as finished) were to be kept intact. If the National Gallery did not build the Gallery within ten years, the bequest was to lapse, and the house was to be used as a Turner Gallery.

(5) Lastly and principally, he directed that the residue of his estate, real and personal, should be devoted to establishing "a Charitable Institution for the maintenance and support of Poor and Decayed Male Artists, being born in England and of English Parents only and lawful issue." This portion of his will was dated 1832, as also the bequest of the two pictures to be hung beside the two by Claude. The appointment of Ruskin as a Trustee and Executor was contained in a later codicil of 1848.

The documents thus roughly summarised were voluminous and obscure. Turner had not employed a solicitor to draft his will, but seems to have called in the assistance of solicitors' clerks. His style in writing was always misty, and of all forms of obscurity that induced by the employment of legal phraseology by laymen is the most unintelligible. One thing, however, was clear; the main purpose of Turner's will was contrary to the Charitable Uses Act (9 George II. c. 36), by which the Statutes of Mortmain were extended to gifts to charities. The will was contested accordingly by the next-of-kin, and a long Chancery suit was in prospect. Ruskin, feeling that this was business for which he was little fitted, renounced the executorship. "To enable me to work quietly," he wrote to his father from Venice (February 17, 1852), "I must beg you to get me out of the executorship; as the thing now stands it would

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be mere madness in me to act, and besides, I should get no good by it."

The disposition of Turner's property was held in suspense until 1856, when a compromise was agreed to by the parties, to which effect was given by a decree of the Court of Chancery, dated March 19, 1856. The Royal Academy received £20,000. The "Carthage" and the "Sun rising in a Mist" went to the National Gallery to hang beside the Claudes. The next-of-kin, whom Turner certainly intended to get next to nothing, got the bulk of the property (except the pictures); the Charity for Decayed Artists—the one thing upon which the testator's mind was steadily fixed from first to last in his confusing dispositions—was entirely overthrown. The part of the decree, however, which more immediately concerns us, relates to the pictures. By the settlement arrived at, "all the pictures, drawings, and sketches by the testator's hand, without any distinction of finished or unfinished, are to be deemed as well given for the benefit of the public."

It was at this point that Ruskin's interest in the matter revived. Though he had renounced his executorship, he still felt himself under a trust to Turner's memory to do what he could to promote the due arrangement and display of the works which had come into possession of the nation. The works in Turner's rooms and portfolios coming within the description of the decree were to be selected by referees, and handed over to the Trustees of the National Gallery. This was done in the autumn of 1856, and Ruskin's work was then to commence. Hearing when he was abroad that the Turner sketches and pictures and drawings had at last been handed over to the National Gallery, he hurried back to the scene of action.

II

There now ensued a succession of the Letters, Reports, and Catalogues from his pen:—

(1) First came a letter to the *Times*, October 28, 1856, in which Ruskin gave a preliminary account of the treasures

now belonging to the nation. In the same letter he offered suggestions with regard to the best way of making the drawings and sketches accessible. With the oil-pictures he was not concerned; but he felt that no one would treat the *drawings* "with more scrupulous care, or arrange them with greater patience" than he would himself. He had doubts, as we have heard, whether anybody else would deem them of any value at all—an estimate which, so far as the official world was concerned, was to be sorrowfully fulfilled. He offered, accordingly, to undertake the task of sorting and arranging the whole collection of drawings and sketches. A few weeks later Ruskin followed up his letter to the *Times* by a private one to Lord Palmerston, who had just become Prime Minister, and with whom he had some acquaintance. The letter is here printed from a copy found among Ruskin's papers:—

"Denmark Hill, 13*th December*, 1856.—My Lord,—I am little used to the formalities of business, and I pray your pardon if I do wrong in addressing you; but I believe rather that I did wrong in making an offer connected with the public service through an irregular channel. Will you permit me, in as short and few words as I can, to lay it before your Lordship?

"The number of drawings and sketches, by the late J. M. W. Turner, now belonging to the nation, amounts to several—I believe to many—thousands. They were left by him in disorder, and the interest attaching to them depends in great degree on the mode of their arrangement; while further there are a large number of them whose subjects are at present unknown, but which, having devoted a great part of my life to inquiries into the mode of Turner's studying from nature, I believe myself to be able, more or less, to elucidate. I am willing to arrange and catalogue these sketches, making the catalogue as far as I can explanatory, and furnishing printed copies of it at my own expense to all public institutions in such number as Her Majesty's Government may judge necessary. I am further ready to prepare and frame, for exhibition to the public, a hundred of the sketches, at my own cost, in order to show the practical working of the system on which I should wish them to be shown. It would then be in the power of the Government to direct or modify, as they

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saw good, the carrying out of the system in question, which, as I have already explained it in a letter which the Trustees of the National Gallery honoured me by their permission to lay before them, I will not trouble your Lordship by detailing here.

"This I am ready to do, on condition of having the Curatorship, without salary, of the sketches in question, so that no operation in mounting, framing, or otherwise preparing them for exhibition could take place without my concurrence; my own directions respecting them being subject to the approval of that member of the Government who is responsible for the safety of the National Collection.

"I do not know if your Lordship attaches much importance to statements of *motives*: but, as I have spent great part of my life in endeavours to explain, and to vindicate the value of, the works of Turner, I do not think I am deceiving myself, and assuredly I am not endeavouring to deceive *you*, in stating that my motives for making this offer are, first, that I heartily desire the sketches may be taken care of, and believe I should take more loving care of them than any one else; secondly, that I desire they should be useful to the public, and believe I could make them *more* useful by the way I would arrange them; and lastly, that I should have much pleasure in the work itself. On this last ground I have good hope that the results I should obtain in a given period would not be less satisfactory than if the work were entrusted to a salaried officer.

"Finally, as the simplest test of my fitness for the task, I may perhaps be permitted to refer to the preservation and arrangement of my own collection, now the third in importance among the private Turner collections of England.—I am, my Lord, with sincere respect, your Lordship's humble and obedient servant, JOHN RUSKIN."

Lord Palmerston must have promptly recommended Ruskin's offer to the favourable notice of the Trustees of the Gallery, for early in February he was authorised by them to begin work as he proposed. This work occupied a considerable portion of his time during the early months of 1857, and thereafter until May 1858.

(2) Meanwhile the Trustees and Directors on their part had begun to exhibit some of Turner's works. By the middle of November, 1856, a selection of thirty-four oil-pictures, which had been cleaned, varnished, and framed,

was opened to public exhibition in some of the lower rooms of Marlborough House (at that time assigned to the Science and Art Department). Ruskin thereupon set to work upon a descriptive and explanatory catalogue. He worked hard, and the hard work told on him, for he notes in his diary that he felt symptoms of a nervous breakdown. The pamphlet was issued on January 12, 1857, and was entitled *Notes on the Turner Gallery at Marlborough House, 1856*. This catalogue, which passed rapidly through several editions, includes one, at least, of Ruskin's finest descriptive passages —the account of the Old Téméraire—and is indeed full of those qualities, "of which," as a critic of the time truly observed, "he cannot divest himself in the slightest sketch or most matter-of-fact catalogue."[1]

Next, the Trustees "considered it desirable that a certain number of the coloured finished drawings should be exhibited as soon as frames could be prepared for them." In February 1857, 102 drawings were therefore exhibited on screens in Marlborough House; many of the *Liber Studiorum* drawings were exhibited also. For this exhibition, which was intended to be temporary only, Ruskin prepared no catalogue. Nor was he responsible for the selection.

(3) Ruskin was strongly opposed to the manner of exhibition adopted in this first display of Turner's water-colours. The drawings included some of the most delicate and important of the whole series, and he pointed out the injury likely to result from continuous exposure to light, but he did not confine himself to negative criticism. He had already in his letter to the *Times* proposed a plan for keeping the more delicate and finished drawings, previously protected with glass, in closed cases. He explained the plan in more detail in the appendix to his *Notes on the Turner Gallery*. The *National Gallery Report* for 1857 states:—

"Mr. Ruskin having proposed a plan for keeping such drawings previously protected with glass, in closed cases; at the same time, by other arrangements, affording facilities for inspecting them; the

[1] The *Economist*, January 31, 1857.

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Trustees have authorised his carrying out, to a certain extent, the method suggested, in order that they may judge of its fitness on a larger scale, and in reference to the conservation and convenient inspection of drawings in museums generally."

In pursuance of this authority, Ruskin selected for glazing and placing in sliding frames in cabinets, one hundred of the drawings and sketches. He provided the mahogany cabinets at his own expense: and for these selected drawings he wrote a "*Catalogue of the Turner Sketches in the National Gallery.* Part I. For private circulation" (1857). This catalogue—which in its original form is among the rarer Ruskiniana—is reprinted in the Library Edition, and it is very interesting. He accompanies Turner on an imaginary sketching-tour, and arranges the notes on the several drawings so as to illustrate the points which the artist desired to seize at each place.

Ruskin's plan for framing the drawings and placing them in closed cabinets has been the means of saving most of those in the National Gallery from fading. It is worth noting that another collector, the late Mr. Henry Vaughan, subsequently made it a condition of his bequest of Turner drawings to the National Galleries of Scotland and Ireland, that they should be publicly exhibited only during one month in each year, and that the month of least light (January); at other times they were to remain in cabinets such as Ruskin devised.

(4) The Hundred drawings, as thus arranged and catalogued, were not exhibited to the public: they were prepared, as already explained, for the inspection of the Trustees. The plan was approved, and Ruskin was authorised to carry it out on a more extended scale, and in this process the arrangement of the First Hundred was broken up. In the end cabinets were provided for 400 drawings. These remained at the National Gallery. Ruskin did not, however, at the time prepare any catalogue for them: it was not till his catalogue of 1881 that any list of them was printed for public use.

Ruskin's work at the time was next devoted to a

catalogue of a different selection. On the adoption by the Trustees of his plan for the arrangement in cabinets of the larger portion of the best Turner drawings, those first placed on the walls in Marlborough House were withdrawn from exhibition. It was, however, considered desirable that besides the collection of drawings arranged in cabinets, and not therefore always visible to every comer, there should be arranged for permanent exhibition a selection of Turner's sketches and drawings, "calculated (in Ruskin's words) to exhibit his methods of study at different periods, and to furnish the general student with more instructive examples than finished drawings can be." Ruskin accordingly selected and arranged for this purpose various drawings (in addition to the 400 mentioned above). For this selection he wrote and printed a catalogue, entitled :—

> *Catalogue of the Sketches and Drawings by J. M. W. Turner, R.A., exhibited in Marlborough House in the year 1857–1858.* Accompanied with Illustrative Notes.

The reader's attention must be taxed to follow here again the future fortunes of this collection. This second set of drawings selected by Ruskin is sometimes referred to by him as the "Kensington Series." The reason is this. Owing to the want of space at the National Gallery (which at that time housed the Royal Academy also), the greater part of the English pictures had for some time been exhibited at Marlborough House. That house was at the end of 1859 allotted to the Prince of Wales. The British portion of the National Gallery was accordingly removed to the South Kensington Museum, where it remained until the enlargement of the Gallery in Trafalgar Square in 1876. The Turner oil-pictures had been removed to Trafalgar Square in 1861, owing to the necessity of complying with a clause in Turner's will. The exhibited portion of the Turner drawings remained at South Kensington till the later year. "Exhibited," I have written; but Ruskin altered the word. "At Kensington they were," he wrote in 1868, "and are, placed for exhibition; but they are not exhibited, for the room in which they hang is always

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empty."[1] "I have never found more than two people (students excepted)," he wrote elsewhere, "in the rooms occupied by Turner's drawings at Kensington, and one of the two, if there *are* two, always looks as if he had got in by mistake."[2]

The return of these drawings to the National Gallery in 1876 was followed by a rearrangement. The "Kensington Series" was renumbered throughout and Ruskin's order of arrangement was broken up.

(5) Ruskin's work, meanwhile, in examining, sorting, and framing the drawings and sketches in the National Gallery, went on during the winter of 1857–58.[3] He was assisted by Mr. George Allen. "I was at work altogether on this task," Mr. Allen told me, "for eight months. Mr. Ruskin was very jealous of any one but his own assistants touching the drawings, lest harm should befall them. After our day's work at the Gallery Mr. Ruskin and I used to take the measurements of drawings to Denmark Hill, when I cut with my own hands about 800 thick *passe-partout* mounts—these were taken to the Gallery and the drawings inserted there." Ruskin gave an account of his labours in the preface to the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*. He worked, he said, "every day, all day long, and often far into the night": and "I have never in my life," he added, "felt so much exhausted as when I locked the last box, and gave the keys to Mr. Wornum, in May 1858." His account of his stewardship was, however, rendered to the Trustees two months earlier; it may be read in the *Report of the Director of the National Gallery*, 1858. The same Report contains the following expression of thanks to Ruskin:—

"The voluminous collection of drawings has been carefully examined and partly arranged by Mr. Ruskin, to whom the Trustees and the public are indebted for his indefatigable attention in

[1] "The Mystery of Life and its Arts," *Sesame and Lilies*, § 101.

[2] *Cestus of Aglaia*, § 4.

[3] It is understood that several sketches which, from the nature of their subjects, it seemed undesirable to preserve, were burned by Ruskin, on the authority of the Trustees (see W. M. Rossetti's *Rossetti Papers*, 1903, p. 383).

this long and difficult undertaking. The plan which Mr. Ruskin originally proposed for the preservation of the more delicate coloured drawings from the effects of light, by placing them in cases fitted to contain a given number, has been carried out. A selection of other drawings, requiring only to be carefully mounted, will in due time be made."

That Ruskin's work was not unattended with some of the friction and jealousies which attend upon divided responsibilities appears from a letter to Mr. Wornum, then Keeper of the Gallery:—

"My dear Wornum, . . . I am sorry to find you putting yourself in something of an antagonistic attitude, as if I wished to bring a charge against you. If I could go on working with you, and look after the drawings myself—I heartily would. I cannot, because I am ill, and I don't think you have the time. If you chose to help in the matter you might get a person appointed under you who would save you all the trouble, and you would have the credit of making the collection available. If you like to keep it shut up, and have all the trouble of looking after it yourself, it is your affair. . . ."

But the toil was not all wearisomeness and vexation. A pleasant glimpse of Ruskin at work in the National Gallery in these years is given in the memoirs of his friend, Stacy Marks, R.A. They had previously been in correspondence, and then Ruskin wrote, "If you come down to the National Gallery any day, and ask the policeman for me, we may meet, and at least know each other's faces":—

"I went (says Marks) and found the eloquent exponent of Turner in rooms in the basement of the building, surrounded by piles of sketch-books and loose drawings by the master, which he was arranging, mounting, and framing,—a congenial employment, a labour of love, to which he devoted months of time, with no recompense beyond the pleasure which the occupation afforded him. I can remember little of our conversation except that it was chiefly about Turner and his work. I had gone to the Gallery with an ill-defined feeling of awe of the great man I was about to see, but this was dissipated directly I had shaken hands with him. There was none of

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the posing of the genius; I found him perfectly simple, unaffected, kindly, and human."[1]

But if the work was not all vexation, neither was it all pleasure. Ruskin speaks in *Modern Painters* of his sorrow at the bad condition of so many of the drawings, and of his "anxiety and heavy sense of responsibility."[2] To these feelings must be added his disappointment at the uncertainties and delays on the part of the Trustees, or rather of the Government, in making due provision for the display of Turner's bequest.

(6) But the patience and care which Ruskin had promised were not exhausted. In his old age he returned to the task which had occupied so much of his time and energy in middle manhood. The catalogues of Turner drawings which he had previously prepared were both out of date. To the drawings in the cabinets there was no catalogue, and even their arrangement in the cabinets, though more systematic, was not completely consistent. The arrangement of the drawings on the walls of the rooms of what Ruskin called "the cellar" of the Gallery was in no intelligible order. He determined to tackle the task again: but he was prevented by ill-health, and ultimately contented himself with a scheme for a rearrangement of the drawings, instead of preparing a new descriptive catalogue. He hoped against hope that the Treasury would find the money, and the authorities of the Gallery have the will, to rearrange the collection systematically and exhibit it worthily. His hopes were not to be realised, but he did his part by recasting (on paper) the whole collection, as then available, and arranging the drawings "in an order which might conveniently become permanent." This order was set forth, and explained, in a

> *Catalogue of the Drawings and Sketches by J. M. W. Turner, R.A., at present exhibited in the National Gallery.* Revised and Cast into Progressive Groups, with Explanatory Notes. 1881.

The reader is already wearied, I fear, by so long a story

[1] *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, by H. S. Marks, R.A., 1894, vol. ii. p. 165.

[2] Preface (§ 3) to *Modern Painters*, vol. v.

of the wanderings of the Turner drawings. But if it is tiresome to follow this retrospect, what must Ruskin's own vexation have been at the time, at seeing, as he did, his own work, in large measure, wasted; the drawings, to him so priceless, treated as of little account, and dispersed from pillar to post; and, what was worse still, Turner's own wishes and directions almost entirely disregarded! Turner's bequest, wrote Ruskin bitterly, was valued "not even at so much as the space of dead brick wall it would cover; his work being left for years packed in parcels at the National Gallery, or hung conclusively out of sight under the shadowy iron vaults of Kensington." [1]

Turner left his oil-pictures to the nation on condition that they should be hung together in a Turner Gallery. No such Gallery was built in Ruskin's lifetime, nor, in the full sense intended by Turner, has it been built now. His pictures are dispersed between the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, the Tate Gallery at Millbank, and provincial galleries. During Ruskin's lifetime, and for nearly ten years afterwards, others of the pictures were not exhibited at all. For fifty years he threw out to deaf ears the proposition that a picture which was worth buying or worth accepting was also worth so much wall-space as would enable it to be seen. The dispersal of the pictures is legal, for it was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1883, and in some measure it may be expedient. But in Ruskin's time no consideration was paid, and not enough consideration is paid now, to Turner's intention in painting his pictures. "Of what use are they except together?" This was a cry from the very heart of the man, and it applies to much more than the designs for the *Liber Studiorum*. Pictures which Turner painted in an intended sequence are scattered, and the studies are often separated from the pictures made from them. These things afflicted Ruskin sorely, and were among the causes of many of his bitterest invectives. He did what he could by occasional letters to the press to recall the nation to its neglect of the Turner Bequest, and he sought to interest such persons of importance as he could obtain access to.

[1] *Cestus of Aglaia*, § 4.

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The following "Memorandum sent to Lord St. Leonards" was found among Ruskin's papers; it is dated July 10, 1861:—

"I have always understood that in the arrangement of Mr. Turner's property which was agreed upon by the parties to the suit, the pictures which were to be taken by the public were to be taken under, and subject to, the conditions prescribed by the testator.

"2. That the public became, by that arrangement, possessors of a larger number of pictures than the testator intended, does not appear to me to invalidate the obligation to carry out the conditions attached to the possession of the smaller number.

"3. I believe if these conditions be not speedily complied with, the injuries which the pictures in question are sustaining by their present mode of exhibition will materially diminish the value of the national property in them.

"4. A large part, in my opinion the most valuable part of the works in question, consisting of water-colour drawings, cannot be exhibited at Kensington, nor can the public derive any advantage from them or make any use of them until a proper gallery is erected for their preservation and exhibition."

But Ruskin's continued protests did not as yet avail. Up to the time of his death, and until public attention was called in the Library Edition of his Works and elsewhere to the neglect, many thousands of the drawings were left, ill-cared for and seldom seen, in tin boxes in the cellars of the National Galleries. An inspection of these boxes, which I was allowed to make in 1904, was a somewhat melancholy experience. Ruskin had spent lavishly of his time in a preliminary sorting of the 19,000 drawings and sketches. They were tied up in brown-paper bundles, each of which bore a number corresponding to a general schedule. The brown-paper wrappers, when I saw them, had upon them the dust of fifty years, which had not in all cases obliterated Ruskin's memoranda. Many of these referred to the gradual destruction of the drawings; the note "MILDEW.—J. R." occurred with painful frequency. One bundle of very fine water-colour sketches, of the late period, was thus noted. Mr. George Allen recalled Ruskin's indignation at finding that some of the Turner collection had been put under tarpaulin

in an exposed place during the enlargement of the Gallery; he employed Mr. Allen to go through the sketches and wipe off the mildew with a sable brush. "I should have tried to get abroad again before this," Ruskin wrote in May 1862 to Rawdon Brown, "but found they had let all the Turner drawings get mildewed at the National Gallery during its repairs. So I stayed to get the mildew off as well as I could, and henceforth I've done with the whole business; and have told them they must take it off, themselves, next time, or leave it on—if they like." I regret to say that it was left on; though the statement that "*all* the Turner drawings" are mildewed was happily only an epistolary exaggeration. Some of the bundles I found to be badly touched; and as these included a few not so noted by Ruskin, it seemed that the evil had spread since 1862. Attention was called to these matters in August 1904, and in April 1905 the Trustees commissioned Mr. A. J. Finberg to undertake a complete examination of the whole collection. The work has been admirably done; the drawings and sketches are now well arranged in cardboard cases; Mr. Finberg's *Inventory* is likely to open a new era in the study of Turner; and in course of time it may be hoped that more of the drawings will be made available for exhibition.[1] But Ruskin did not live to see anything of this. What he saw was the treatment of the drawings and sketches as if they were "waste paper." And in this fact he felt that ten years of his life had been, in a chief purpose of them, wasted also.[2] The feeling contributed to the mood of despondency which marked some following years. Yet there were times, in years later still, when he felt that the future might still be his. "Turner's most precious drawings," he wrote in 1883, "are kept in the cellar of the National Gallery:—nevertheless my work is done; and so far as the English nation studies the Arts at all, will tell, in its due time."[3]

[1] I may be allowed to refer, in this connexion, to suggestions made in my Introduction to vol. xiii. of the Library Edition, and to my little brochure, *Buried Turners at the National Gallery* (1905).

[2] *Sesame and Lilies*, § 102.

[3] Epilogue to *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., 1883.

CHAPTER XXII

PUBLIC LECTURER—THE OXFORD MUSEUM

(1856–1860)

"I hope that you will have pleasure in the results of these lectures of mine, though you don't like lecturing as a principle: nor do I, but it does much good. People do like so much to be saved the trouble of reading and thinking. If I wanted to produce immediate effect in any direction, I am quite sure a month or two's course of lectures would do more good than many books. But the book influences the best people, though not the most."—RUSKIN (Letter to his father, Feb. 28, 1859).

DURING the years in which Ruskin was writing the latter volumes of *Modern Painters* he became widely known as a Public Lecturer. "I want also," he had written in 1858 when describing his multifarious activities, "to give lectures in all the manufacturing towns."[1] He did not quite accomplish that, but between March 1856 and March 1860 he delivered in all seventeen speeches, addresses, or lectures, and many of these were collected into volumes. *The Political Economy of Art* (renamed afterwards *A Joy for Ever and its Price in the Market*) consists of lectures delivered at Manchester in connexion with the "Art Treasures" Exhibition held there in 1857. *The Two Paths* is a collection of lectures delivered, during 1857–58–59, in London and various places in the country. What was his motive? what were his objects? Not, of course, money-making. He was in no need of money, and he seldom accepted any for his lectures. His objects in going upon the platform were the same as those which his books were meant to serve; he sought to increase the range of his audience, to widen, if not to deepen, his influence.

[1] See below, p. 472.

I

The verdict on his Edinburgh lectures had been indecisive; some hearers thought his delivery ineffective. But practice improved his manner, and in the accounts of these later lectures we read only of crowded and enthusiastic audiences, charmed with the lecturer's facility, adroitness, and rhetorical skill. Those who shared the platform with him sometimes complained that he filled the stage only too completely. This was the case, according to one of the other actors, at Cambridge, when Ruskin, Cruikshank, and Redgrave were invited down to assist at the opening of the School of Art (Oct. 29, 1858):—

"I found, rather to my disgust," says Redgrave, "that music was to be mixed up with the speaking, and also that Ruskin had asked to have a full hour, so that it behoved me to make my speech as short as possible, if all was to be compressed into decent time. We met at eight o'clock P.M. The Vice-Chancellor introduced me to the meeting, and I knocked off my business speech as speedily as possible. Then there was another musical flourish, and Ruskin mounted the stage. He began by saying that when he spoke impromptu he said too much, or he said too little, or he forgot half he wished to say, or he was misunderstood, and therefore he had *written* his speech (cunning fellow, eh! before such an audience), and begged leave to read it. He was as cool and as much at his ease as I was anxious, and that is saying a good deal. His discourse took quite an hour and a half; then there was a rush for refreshments, and poor Cruikshank felt he was nowhere; in fact, he got up to say he had no time or opportunity to say anything."[1]

But if his fellow-speakers were disappointed, his audiences were delighted. "He secures the confidence of his listeners," wrote one of them, of the same lecture, "by showing them, by the novelty of thought, expression, and illustration, that he has been taking pains in preparing what he is saying to them. He drops in passing all sorts of startling or piquant dashes of criticism; . . . gives some experiences

[1] *Richard Redgrave, C.B., R.A.: a Memoir*, 1891, p. 205.

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and observations gathered in recent travel, always well told and always amusing . . .; but, above all, there is always some main leading idea which permeates and gives consistency to the whole, and which satisfies every hearer that the speaker has a definite purpose in view, and that amidst all discursiveness of thought, affluence of words, and novelty of illustration, it is never really lost sight of, much less forgotten."[1]

His parents, as before in the case of the Edinburgh lectures, objected to what they considered the dissipation of energy, and even loss of caste, involved in catering, even in intellectual matters, to popular audiences. Ruskin defended himself in the letter which I have placed at the head of this chapter. He wanted not only to increase the range of his influence, but to produce "immediate effect." He had the instinct for action: he sought to influence the doers as well as the thinkers: he wanted to see, in the everyday world, some fruit of his principles and labours. It was in this spirit that he took to the public platform. His studies and pursuits and methods were different from those of the politicians, but his aim was in this respect the same as theirs. He wanted to secure the vote and interest of those whom he addressed on behalf of causes which he believed to be practical.

II

This missionary spirit, this addressing of himself to questions of action and not only of speculation, is particularly manifest in the Manchester lectures on *The Political Economy of Art* (July 1857). Art was, as it were, the medium in which he worked; the effect he sought to produce was political. With these lectures he took particular pains, retiring for uninterrupted quiet in writing them to the village of Cowley, two miles from Oxford, and then less a suburb of the city than it is now. Professor Norton was staying at Oxford at the time. Ruskin read a great

[1] *Literary Gazette*, December 11, 1858.

part of the lectures to me," he says, "and the readings led to long discussions, of which I now remember only, to use his own phrase, 'an inconceivable humility' on his part in listening to my objections to his views, and an invincible 'obstinacy' (his own word again) in maintaining his opinions. In the main I was desirous to hold him to the work of the imagination, and he was set on subordinating it to what he esteemed of more direct and practical importance."[1] But though Ruskin's purpose was grave, his spirit at the time was, adds Professor Norton, full of buoyancy and cheerfulness. It communicated itself to the delivery of the lectures themselves, which was marked, according to the contemporary reports, by great vigour and verve. The second of them lasted an hour and three-quarters, but was listened to with "most marked attention." The proceeds of the sale of tickets were given, at Ruskin's request, to the Working Men's College.

These lectures, which Ruskin published with additions later in the year, have a special significance in the *corpus* of his Works. They contain the first systematic treatment of a subject which had hitherto been touched upon by him only incidentally. He was satisfied at the time with his book. "It's not very dull," he wrote to a friend, "and of all the books I have written, it's the only one I'm proud of."[2] After reading the book, for republication twenty-two years later, he said that the exposition of the truths, to which he had given the chief energy of his life, would here be found "first undertaken systematically and in logical sequence; and what I have since written on the political influence of the Arts has been little more than the expansion of these first lectures, in the reprint of which not a sentence is omitted or changed."[3] The new title which he selected for that reprint—"*A Joy for Ever (and its Price in the Market)*"—was intended as a summary of all his teaching; "the end," he said at Oxford, "of my whole Professorship would be

[1] Preface to the American "Brantwood Edition" of *A Joy for Ever*.

[2] Letter to Lady Stuart de Rothesay, quoted in A. J. C. Hare's *Story of Two Noble Lives* (1893), vol. ii. p. 479.

[3] Preface to *A Joy for Ever*.

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accomplished,—and far more than that,—if only the English nation could be made to understand that the beauty which is indeed to be a joy for ever, must be a joy for all." [1]

To the general subject of Ruskin's political and economic teaching it will be necessary to recur more fully in the next volume. Here I need only note some of the salient points in these lectures. Ruskin began by comparing the body politic to a farm or a household, in which the rule should be co-operation, not competition; in which each member should be set to the work most proper to him. His theory of government was paternal. He held, in the language of later times, that the State should be a "model employer" and furnish an example in arts and crafts—producing even drawing materials of the highest quality—not by way of competition with private enterprise, but in order to set a standard. Above all, the State should more fully educate the people, and provide for the veterans of industry comfortable homes. In a single and memorable phrase he compressed—as he said a few years later—the whole of his political economy—"Soldiers of the Ploughshare as well as Soldiers of the Sword!" "Do you look out," wrote George Eliot to a friend, "for Ruskin's books whenever they appear. His little book on *The Political Economy of Art* contains some magnificent passages, mixed up with stupendous specimens of arrogant absurdity on some economical points." [2] In which category, one may wonder, did she place the pregnant phrase which has become the watchword of a certain school of political thought and of a particular political movement? Then turning from the State to the individual, Ruskin scourged the tasteless luxury and ignorant patronage of the time. He pleaded for the preservation of ancient buildings, for the encouragement of artistic work in ornament and dress, for better-informed standards of taste in pictures and in furniture, for more public spirit in the patronage of art.

The passion and irony with which Ruskin enforced his

[1] *Aratra Pentelici*, § 17.

[2] Letter to Miss Sara Hennell January 17, 1858; in *George Eliot's Life*, by J. W. Cross (1885), vol. ii. p. 7.

points, the beautiful descriptions with which he adorned them, make *The Political Economy of Art* one of his most characteristic and stimulating pieces. Much of its subject-matter, when stripped, in the foregoing summary, of his rich eloquence, may sound familiar to readers of to-day. But the date and the circumstances of the lectures must be remembered. What is now accepted as common ground was not then conceded or understood, and it was these very lectures by Ruskin that helped to win the victory. They were given in the sacred city of that "Manchester School" whose political doctrines of *laissez faire*, always hateful to him, were then much in the ascendant. With characteristic courage and enjoyment of the fray, he bearded the lion in its own den; or perhaps we might rather say "tickled"—so deftly and adroitly did he perform the operation. His listeners heard him gladly; but the pundits of the press, when they came to read his heresies in cold blood, were at once angry and scornful. Many of the reviewers fixed upon Ruskin's remark in his preface, that he had read no Political Economy, as disqualifying him from writing on the subject; he had, however, thought much upon it, and perhaps with the more originality for his abstention from the text-books.[1] The *Manchester Examiner and Times*, then a leading organ of Liberalism, dismissed his pleas for State intervention as "arrant nonsense";[2] while other critics quoted against him, as if that clenched the matter for ever, one or other of Macaulay's diatribes against the extension of State interference.[3]

The trend of political thought has shifted far since the days when such sentences by Macaulay were supposed to be the last word on the functions of Government. It is worth noticing, however, that though Ruskin's message was at the time scouted in many quarters as rank heresy, it yet accorded well with the hopeful spirit of the mid-Victorian era, and

[1] See his reply to the critics in *Two Paths*, § 189 *n*.

[2] In a leading article in that journal of July 14, 1858.

[3] See, for instance, the *Literary Gazette*, January 23, 1858, which cited a familiar passage, about the State as "Lady Bountiful" and "Paul Pry," in the essay on "Southey's Colloquies on Society."

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that to the prophet himself the fulfilment of his hopes and dreams seemed but a little way off. "A time will come," he said—"I do not think even now it is far from us"—that time of which, a generation later, his disciple William Morris was still writing as not far distant: "the wonderful days a-coming" when

> ". . . what wealth then shall be left us when none can gather gold
> To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?
> Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,
> And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;
> And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead;
> And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;
> And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvellous fiddle-bow,
> And the banded choirs of music: all those that do and know.
> For all these shall be ours and all men's, nor shall any lack a share
> Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair!"[1]

The hopeful spirit—the buoyant tone, as of Browning's "glad confident morning," which marks Ruskin's first essays on the political economy of art—was to contrast strongly with the spirit of his later writings on similar subjects. "When he spoke again on questions of Political Economy it was in another tone, and with words of darker presage."[2]

III

The good hope of contributing something to the speedy amelioration of social and political conditions was not the only motive derived from the conditions of the time which took Ruskin to the platform during these years. Many of his lectures and addresses were delivered to Schools of Art or Drawing Classes. The decade in which he was speaking

[1] "The Day is Coming," in *Poems by the Way*, 1891. The poem first appeared in *Chants for Socialists*, published by the Socialist League in 1885.

[2] Preface by Professor Norton to the American "Brantwood Edition" of *A Joy for Ever*.

had seen a considerable extension of the machinery for State education in art. In 1835 a Select Committee had been appointed "to inquire into the means of extending a Knowledge of the Arts and of the Principles of Design among the people (especially the manufacturing population) of the country." The recommendations of this Committee led to the establishment in 1837 of a Central Government "School of Design" (at Somerset House), and in 1841 of similar local Schools of Design in various manufacturing centres. The idea was that there was some specific and limited way in which design could be taught, and that the teaching should be directly associated with manufacturing processes. To protest against this idea was one of Ruskin's main objects. The "Schools of Design" had already been found to be a failure; and in consequence of the report of another Select Committee in 1849 the basis of the Governmental scheme was widened. The "Council of the Government School of Art" became a "Department of Practical Art" (1851), with a General Superintendent (Mr., afterwards Sir Henry Cole) and an Art Adviser (Mr. Richard Redgrave, R.A.). In 1853 there was a further reorganisation, the Department becoming that of "Science and Art"; it was removed in 1852 from Somerset House to Marlborough House, and in 1857 from Marlborough House to South Kensington. The official idea then was to supplement schools for teaching design by schools for the improvement of public taste. This was a reform in the right direction; but Ruskin continued impenitently insistent upon the fatal mistake of supposing that design could be effectually taught by rule and as a branch of manufacturing activity; still convinced, too, that the teaching of drawing, as an integral branch of general education, was far more important than the special teaching of design. The conclusions which Ruskin formed were entirely corroborated at a later date by William Morris, who was able to speak from wide and long experience as an employer of labour for purposes of artistic production. "I often have great difficulty," he told the Royal Commission on Technical Education in 1882, "in dealing with the workmen I employ in London, because of their general ignorance." "This

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general ignorance," adds his biographer, "was just what had to be met by general education, not by specific technical instruction. But drawing, as the basis of all manual arts whatever, he held to be an essential element in general education which should be worthy of the name. 'I think undoubtedly everybody ought to be taught to draw, just as much as everybody ought to be taught to read and write.'"[1] This is one of the main propositions which Ruskin laid down in his lectures. Thirty years later it was in some sort accepted, when by the Code of 1890 drawing was made a compulsory subject in elementary schools for boys.

On the themes thus indicated Ruskin constantly preached in his lectures of this period. "There is no way of getting good art but one—at once the simplest and most difficult—namely to enjoy it." Artistic design can only be encouraged by a public capable of enjoying it. The object of education in art is not to make money but to get knowledge and pleasure. "Do you suppose it is a law of God or nature that people shall be paid in money for becoming wiser and happier?" Sometimes he was careful to connect his views on artistic matters with political doctrine. Thus in 1860, when invited to give evidence before a Select Committee on Public Institutions, he improved the occasion by informing the Committee that their investigations into the reform of museums and galleries would be labour lost, unless it was accompanied by reforms in social and economic conditions. Among particular matters mentioned by Ruskin was the importance of Early Closing. His evidence is also of interest as containing a sketch of a museum as he conceived it ought to be arranged; in later years he was in some measure to realise his ideal at Sheffield.

A paper which attracted attention was a contribution to the movement for associating the Universities with Middle-Class Education which at this time (1857–58) was beginning to take shape. The paper was written in the form of a letter to Temple, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, then H.M. Inspector of Training Colleges. Ruskin described clearly the place which, he thought, might be assigned to Art in a

[1] Mackail's *Life of William Morris*, vol. ii. p. 48.

University curriculum; thirteen years later he was able, as the first Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford, to give practical expression to his theories. In the same letter he laid stress on the importance of giving a more human note to History, and of associating Archæology with the other studies of the University. Here, as in so much that he wrote on the subject of education, he was a pioneer. Green's *Short History* —"not of English Kings or English Conquests, but of the English People"—was not published till 1874; and it is only of late years that Archæology has taken its place in the studies of Schools and Universities. Temple, in forwarding the paper to Sir Thomas Acland for publication,[1] wrote an interesting appreciation of Ruskin's work. "Is not Ruskin's letter beautiful?" he said, adding: "The liberal arts are supreme over their sciences. Instead of the rules being despotic, the great artist usually proves his greatness by rightly setting aside rules; and the great critic is he who, while he knows the rule, can appreciate the 'law within the law' which overrides the rule. In no other way does Ruskin so fully show his greatness in criticism as in that fine inconsistency for which he has been so often attacked by men who do not see the real consistency that lies beneath." It should be added that Ruskin in these years filled the office of "Examiner in Drawing" in the "Middle Class Examinations" then lately established by the University of Oxford.

IV

In thus seeking to influence the course of national education in art, Ruskin had a further and a particular object. This is stated in one of the letters to his father, in which he apologises for his persistency in lecturing:—

"Bolton, *Sunday* [*February* 27, 1859].—My consent to give these two addresses was not merely in good nature; the publication of Sir Gardner Wilkinson's book had forced me to think carefully

[1] In *Some Account of the Origin and Objects of the New Oxford Examinations for the Title of Associate in Arts and Certificates for the year 1858*, by T. D. Acland, 1858.

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over some essential principles which it contradicted, and which were not clearly enough stated in any of my books. I wanted to announce these as soon as I could to stop misunderstanding and the mischief of part of Wilkinson's book, which otherwise would have gone on doing harm for another year. . . ."

The book referred to is Sir Gardner Wilkinson's work on Decorative Art (1858)—a book, as Ruskin says, "excellent in almost all points," but yielding "too much indulgence to that old idea that nature is to be idealised or improved when it is brought down to manufacture or to decoration." The book insisted, as Ruskin did also, on the essential unity of art, and on the dignity of decorative work: but the "indulgence" tended to confirm views to which Ruskin was resolutely opposed.

In one of his addresses he defended what are now best known as "Morris carpets," with floral designs. He "could not see, since the first thing we did usually to make the ground fit to be walked upon by any festive procession was always to strew flowers upon it, why we should refuse to have flowers on our carpets lest we should stumble over them, any more than we should refuse to have pictures on our walls lest we should knock our heads through them."[1] Nature *versus* Conventionalism in art was the cause for which Ruskin fought, and this is the principle which gives unity to all the discourses collected in *The Two Paths*. This is one of Ruskin's most brilliant books, containing some of his best-known sayings—such as that of Titian, "a strange undercurrent of everlasting murmur about his name which means the deep consent of all great men that he is greater than they." The dependence of all noble design, in any kind, on the sculpture or painting of Organic Form, was the law which he sought to illustrate. How happy is his satire on formal symmetry in design:—

"You are taught in some of our schools to turn a leaf the other way, opposite to itself; and the two leaves set opposite ways are

[1] "Remarks on the Recent Progress of Design as applied to Manufacture," at the Society of Arts, March 12, 1856; reprinted in the Library Edition, vol. xvi. pp. 427–430.

called a "design": and thus it is supposed possible to produce ornamentation, though you have no more brains than a looking-glass or a kaleidoscope has. But if once you learn to draw the human figure, you will find that knocking two men's heads together does not necessarily constitute a good design." CHAP. XXII.

And how fine his account of the lordly kingdom which is open to the architect as sculptor:—

"From visions of angels, down to the least important gesture of a child at play, whatever may be conceived of Divine, or beheld of Human, may be dared or adopted by you; throughout the kingdom of animal life, no creature is so vast, or so minute, that you cannot deal with it, or bring it into service; the lion and the crocodile will couch about your shafts; the moth and the bee will sun themselves upon your flowers; for you, the fawn will leap; for you, the snail be slow; for you, the dove smooth her bosom, and the hawk spread her wings toward the south. All the wide world of vegetation blooms and bends for you; the leaves tremble that you may bid them be still under the marble snow; the thorn and the thistle, which the earth casts forth as evil, are to you the kindliest servants; no dying petal, nor drooping tendril, is so feeble as to have no help for you; no robed pride of blossom so kingly, but it will lay aside its purple to receive at your hands the pale immortality. . . ."

Ruskin, it will be seen, gave of his best in these public lectures, and they were well appreciated. This was especially the case with the lectures at Manchester on "The Unity of Art" (Feb. 22, 1859) and at Bradford on "Manufacture and Design" (March 1). He had driven down to Manchester—perhaps he liked the idea of so practical a protest against machinery, as a preliminary to his lecture. But he found the driving tour restful, and he had the faculty of working and writing wherever he chanced to be. Much of his Manchester lecture—as also his second letter on the Oxford Museum—was thus written on the road. The fresh air and the scenery invigorated him, and conduced to the verve and "go" which he threw into his discourses. The lecture at Manchester was a great success. "The people here," he wrote to his father (Feb. 22), "have liked me upon art much

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better than on political economy. They all expressed themselves excessively pleased. Sir Elkanah and Lady Armitage were there and seemed very glad to see me again, scolding me a little for not using their house as mine. I am going to breakfast there to-morrow." The lecturing tour seems to have been arranged by Gambart the picture-dealer (the founder, too, of the French Gallery), who had, a year or two before, introduced Ruskin to Rosa Bonheur. "I like him very much," wrote Ruskin (Feb. 24), "and he tells me much that is very useful to me; he is so straightforward and eager, and has a great deal of real feeling besides: which he showed yesterday at Manchester by asking for messages home to mamma and you. . . . Gambart breakfasted with us at Sir Elkanah's, and we formed plans at breakfast for buying all Venice from the Austrians—pictures, palaces, and everything—and asked Sir Elkanah to set the project on foot, in Manchester"—the political economy of art again, it will be seen. At Manchester, on this occasion, Ruskin visited also Mrs. Gaskell, of whose works he was a great admirer. From Manchester Ruskin went to Bolton, where he stayed for some days before fulfilling his next lecturing engagement. This was at Bradford, in connexion with the opening of a newly formed School of Design, and Ruskin took particular pains in the preparation of his lecture. It "attracted," we read,[1] "a very numerous and distinguished assembly. Never perhaps since Mr. Thackeray's lectures has such an audience within the same compass been gathered together." The audience showed "rapt attention and delight." Ruskin himself was pleased. "All went well last night," he writes to his father (March 2), "and everybody seemed much delighted—a comfortable room to speak in, and the Mayor of Bradford for Chairman, and perfectly silent and attentive audience." It is in this lecture that the famous description of mediæval Pisa occurs, with its beautiful close:—

"And over all these, ever present, near or far—seen through the leaves of vine, or imaged with all its march of clouds in the Arno's

[1] *Bradford Observer*, March 3, 1858.

stream, or set with its depth of blue close against the golden hair and burning cheek of lady and knight,—that untroubled and sacred sky, which was to all men, in those days of innocent faith, indeed the unquestioned abode of spirits, as the earth was of men; and which opened straight through its gates of cloud and veils of dew into the awfulness of the eternal world;—a heaven in which every cloud that passed was literally the chariot of an angel, and every ray of its Evening and Morning streamed from the throne of God.—What think you of that for a School of Design?"

V

There was another movement of the time which Ruskin eagerly desired to influence. The "battle of the styles" came to its height in the years 1857–58–59. The battle-ground was the new Government Offices. In 1856 the Government had invited English and foreign architects in general competition to submit designs for the new public offices. More than two hundred designs were sent in; they were exhibited in Westminster Hall in 1857. All the educated world went to see them; the public prints were filled with criticisms and controversy. Parliamentary Committees, Parliamentary debates, and public deputations were busy with the dispute. In the end, after much delay, Gilbert Scott was appointed architect for the India Office (1858)—the other buildings being left over for subsequent erection. Scott's design was Gothic, and the victory seemed to have been won. But in the following year the Government of Lord Derby, which had given Scott the commission, went out, and Lord Palmerston came in. Among Lord Palmerston's stock of antipathies, a specially hot place was given to Gothic architecture. It was dark, he said; it was inconvenient; it was Jesuitical. "It was all very well for our ancestors to build in that way, because they knew no better; but why should we?" Lord Palmerston carried his point, and Scott was compelled to abandon his original Gothic design for one in the Italian manner.

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Ruskin was on the Continent at the moment, and wrote to a friend on the subject:—

(*To* E. S. Dallas.) "Thun, *Aug.* 18, 1859. . . . Nice sensible discussions you're having in England there about Gothic and Italian, aren't you? And the best of the jest is that besides nobody knowing which is which, there is not a man living who can build either. What a goose poor Scott (who will get his liver fit for *pâté de Strasburg* with vexation) must be, not to say at once he'll build anything. If I were he, I'd build Lord P. an office with all the capitals upside down; and tell him it was in the Greek style, inverted, to express typically Government by Party: Up to-day, down to-morrow."

The interest taken in the battle of the styles, the position which Ruskin held as the inspirer of the Gothic hosts, the prejudices against which he contended, are all reflected in a leading article in a popular journal:—

"If the discussion lasts we shall all be Vitruvians or Winckelmanns by Christmas; photographs of sea-green Venice will shadow every wall; tea-tables will chat of Corinth; and Doric pediments will support Renaissance sideboards. . . . Lord Palmerston hits off his theory in a light, airy, and cheerful style; the Calvinists are cursing worse than ever; the Puseyites are at work upon their Madonnas from Portland. . . . The Palace is to look penal, and the prison festive; it was always so in England, and we have abandoned every hope of reform. Still there are some who benefit by these exhibitions of rapid idiosyncrasy. . . . Above and beyond all, it is a godsend, a windfall, an apocalypse for Mr. Ruskin. That architectural Imperator, who claims the championship of English art, is in raptures with the generation that listens to him when he discourses on ogives and mullions, on leaden casements and high-pitched roofs. . . . It is matter of congratulation that the Government, repudiating the ecclesiastical sympathies of the late First Commissioner of Public Works [Lord John Manners], has given a check to the mitre and crozier architects who would convert a public office into a sanctuary loaded with carvings and brasswork, lit by fantastic windows, and expensive without being commodious" (*Daily Telegraph*, August 31, 1859).

Ruskin by his *Seven Lamps* and *Stones of Venice* had done much to assist a Gothic Revival, but there was now a reaction, and in the battle over the Government Offices in Whitehall the classical school won the day. In the next large piece of building by Government—the Law Courts in the Strand—the victory went to the Gothic side; and that again has been followed by a reaction, in the newer Government Offices in Whitehall. Meanwhile the battle of the styles had been fought out upon another field, and here Ruskin entered the lists.

The foundation of a Museum at Oxford was the result of a long and arduous struggle. Acland had begun the agitation in 1847 with a memorandum, signed by himself and other scientific teachers, in which he urged "the erection of an edifice within the precincts of the University for the better display of materials illustrative of the facts and laws of the natural world." In 1848 he put out a pamphlet urging the creation of an Honour School in Natural Science. "A general insight into natural laws, he maintained, was ennobling; and he referred effectively to the second volume of *Modern Painters* which was then creating a profound sensation at Oxford."[1] At last, in 1854, the building of a Museum was sanctioned, and architects were invited to send in designs. A pamphlet for their guidance was issued, and in considering the actual edifice it is important to remember that the estimated cost was limited to £30,000, and that convenience of interior arrangement was to be considered more essential than exterior decoration. The designs were received, and they were exhibited to the public in the Radcliffe Camera. After a process of elimination, two were reported to Convocation as being suitable. One of these bore the motto *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum*, and was in the Palladian style;[2] the other, bearing the motto *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum*, was Gothic—"Veronese Gothic of the

[1] *Sir Henry Acland: a Memoir*, by J. B. Atlay, 1903, p. 153.

[2] The architect was E. M. Barry (son of the architect of the Houses of Parliament).

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best and manliest type," Professor Hort described it, "in a new and striking combination."[1] On the eve of the poll, Acland put out an anonymous pamphlet advocating the Gothic design. There was a rain of pamphlets in the University, and the opponents of the Museum, hoping to profit by the division of opinion on the two designs, rallied for a last assault. But by sixty-eight votes to sixty-four Convocation passed the vote for the Museum, the design selected being that with the motto *Nisi Dominus*. The successful design was the work of Benjamin Woodward, of the Dublin firm of Deane, Woodward & Deane. The foundation stone was laid on June 20, 1855.

Ruskin had been heart and soul with Acland in advocating the Gothic design. Nowhere in England had the Gothic lingered so late as in Oxford; nowhere, it may well have seemed to Ruskin, was it so important that the Gothic should be revived. On the evening of the day which decided the matter in Convocation (December 12, 1854), he wrote to Acland:—

"I have just received your telegraphic message from Woodward, and am going to thank God for it and lie down to sleep. It means much, I think, both to you and me. I trust you will have no anxiety, such as you have borne, to bear again in this cause. The Museum in your hands, as it must eventually be, will be the root of as much good to others as I suppose it is rational for any single living soul to hope to do in its earth-time."

Ruskin's enthusiasm is easy to understand. It was not merely the adoption of the Gothic style that pleased him; it was also the employment of architects who had seized the spirit, as well as the form, of Gothic work, and had already attained some success in the training of workmen as artists, and not as tools. Woodward had in 1853 entered into partnership with Sir Thomas Deane, and in that year the firm began the building of the new library at Trinity College, Dublin, in the style of the Byzantine Renaissance at Venice. In lecturing in Dublin ten years later, Ruskin referred to that building (which was completed in 1857)

[1] *Memoir of Acland*, p. 207.

as "the first realisation I had the joy to see of the principles I had, until then, been endeavouring to teach, but which, alas, is now to me no more than the richly canopied monument of one of the most earnest souls that ever gave itself to the arts, and one of my truest and most loving friends, Benjamin Woodward."[1] The building at Dublin was the more the realisation of Ruskin's principles, in that an experiment was made both in enlisting the support of eminent artists to design decorations, and also in leaving sculptural details to the taste of individual workmen who copied natural foliage in an unconventional style. Ruskin took a keen interest in the details of the building, and secured some interesting collaborateurs:—

"Miss S[iddal]," wrote Rossetti to Allingham (July 4, 1855), "made some lovely designs for him (Woodward), but Ruskin thought them too good for his workmen at Dublin to carve. One, however, was done (how I know not) and is there; it represents an angel with some children and all manner of other things, and is, I believe, close to a design by Millais of mice eating corn."[2]

"Yesterday in Dublin," wrote William Allingham (May 28, 1855), "I saw but hastily the part-finished building in Trinity College, which is after Ruskin's heart. Style, early Venetian (I suppose), with numberless capitals delicately carved over with holly-leaves, shamrocks, various flowers, birds, and so on. There are also circular frames here and there in the wall, at present empty, to be filled no doubt with eyes of coloured stone. Ruskin has written to the architect, a young man, expressing his high approval of the plans, so by-and-by all you cognoscenti will be rushing over to examine the Stones of Dublin."

With the young architect Ruskin had formed, through their mutual friend Rossetti, an affectionate friendship. Benjamin Woodward, who was of Irish birth, was of an

[1] *Sesame and Lilies*, § 103.

[2] *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham*, 1897, p. 141. Dr. Birkbeck Hill, the editor of those letters, states, however, that the mice eating corn are not to be found, and adds that "Sir Thomas Deane, the son of Woodward's partner, is sure that neither Millais's nor Miss Siddal's design was used" (*ibid.*, p. 146).

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enthusiastic temperament and most lovable nature—a man, says one who knew him, "of rare genius and deep artistic knowledge, beautiful in face and character, but with the shadow of an early death already stealing over him."[1] He spent unremitting labour upon the Museum, as also on another building at Oxford, to which reference will presently be made, but he did not live to see the completion of his work. In 1860 he fell a victim to consumption; went to the south of France for the winter, and died at Lyons on his return journey on May 15, 1861, in his forty-sixth year.

The building of the Oxford Museum gave to Ruskin and his friend an opportunity of carrying still further the attempt to revive freedom of design in the craftsman in the spirit of mediæval Gothic art. Ruskin's enthusiasm at the prospect is reflected in a letter to Acland:—

"I hope to be able to get Millais and Rossetti to design flower and beast borders—crocodiles and various vermin—such as you are particularly fond of—Mrs. Buckland's 'dabby things'—and we will carve them and inlay them with Cornish serpentine all about your windows. I will pay for a good deal myself, and I doubt not to find funds. *Such* capitals as we will have!"

Rossetti did not design anything for the Museum, though he enlisted other artist friends in the cause; and in other respects Ruskin was as good as his word and better. He was in constant communication with Woodward, and interested himself in every detail—in the architectural decoration of the exterior, in the interior decoration, the statues, the marbles, the ironwork which supported the roof. He drew a large number of designs for windows; and one at least of

[1] *Reminiscences of Oxford*, by the Rev. W. Tuckwell, 1900, p. 48. Woodward was famous also for his gift of silence—"the stillest creature that ever breathed out of an oyster shell" was Rossetti's description (Mackail's *Life of William Morris*, vol. i. p. 122). Of his partners, the elder Deane was a chatterbox, the younger stammered; hence the saying of Jeune, the Vice-Chancellor, of the difficulty of dealing with architects of whom "one won't talk, one can't talk, and one never stops talking."

the actual windows of the façade was carved from his design.[1] He is said also to have designed six iron brackets for the roof.[2] He also reared with his own hands one of the brick columns. "Acland used to show it with great pride to visitors at the Museum; legend relates that the workmen found it necessary to demolish the column and reconstruct it by less eminent hands."[3] This was not Ruskin's first experience of the kind, as appears from a letter to a friend:—

(*To* Mrs. John Simon.) "Cowley, *July* 3, 1857. . . . I have got lodgings in a farmhouse in the middle of a field, with a garden of gooseberries and orange lilies; and a loose stone wall round it, all over stone-crop. It is two miles and a half from Oxford, and I write there—here—I don't know if it is 'here, or there' grammatically—till half-past twelve every day: then walk into Oxford and dine with my friend Dr. Acland, and after dinner take a lesson in bricklaying. He is building a study; and I built a great bit yesterday, which the bricklayer my tutor in a most provoking manner pulled all down again. But this bit I have done to-day is to stand."

He was fond of trying his hand at all the arts and crafts "Half my power," he said, "of ascertaining facts of any kind connected with the arts, is in my stern habit of doing the thing with my own hands till I know its difficulty." He worked with a carpenter until he could take an even shaving six feet long off a board; and with a house-painter, long enough "to feel the master's superiority in the use of a blunt brush." But the instrument he finally decided to be the most difficult of management was the trowel. He had to abandon all hope of obtaining the least skill with it.

[1] So Ruskin himself states in *Sesame and Lilies*, § 103. See also below, p. 484. It is not easy, however, to identify the window with complete certainty; in all probability it is the one on the first floor, next, on the spectator's left, to the centre of the building.

[2] This statement rests on the authority of a note in Wise and Smart's *Bibliography of Ruskin* vol. i. p. 94, where it is stated that "Photographs of a series of eight brackets, designed by Mr. Ruskin for the Oxford Museum, are published by Messrs. Bedford, Lemere and Co., 147 Strand, W.C." The photographers have now destroyed the negatives.

[3] *Memoir of Acland*, p. 223.

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unless he gave up all thoughts of any future literary or political career.[1]

Besides thus lending a hand himself, Ruskin both contributed funds and enlisted the support of other patrons and artists. The money voted by the University sufficed only for the bare shell of the building; all embellishments and decorations had to be met out of private resources. Ruskin gave £300 to improve the work of one set of windows, and his father provided funds for one of the statues (that of Hippocrates). In conjunction with Rossetti, he also induced Woolner and Alexander Munro, and other eminent sculptors, to execute some of the figures for hardly more than nominal remuneration.

A further group of artists gathered round Woodward in connexion with another building which he was employed to erect in Oxford. This was the old Debating Hall (now the Library) of the Union Society—a specimen of modern Venetian Gothic, in red brick, with stone dressings. Rossetti had gone down to Oxford with Woodward in the Long Vacation of 1857 to see the progress of the Museum; he was greatly struck with the beauty of the Union building:—

"Thinking of it only (says Rossetti) as his beautiful work, and without taking into consideration the purpose it was intended for (indeed, hardly knowing of the latter), I offered to paint figures of some kind on the blank spaces of one of the gallery window bays: and another friend who was with us, William Morris, offered to do the same for a second bay. Woodward was greatly delighted with the idea, as his principle was that of the mediæval builders, to avail himself in the building of as much decoration as circumstances permitted at the time, and not prefer uniform bareness to partial beauty. He had never before had a decided opportunity of introducing picture work in a building, and grasped at the idea.

"In the course of that long vacation, six other friends of ours—Edward Burne-Jones, Arthur Hughes, V. C. Prinsep, John Pollen (the painter of the lovely roof of Merton chapel), R. S. Stanhope, and Alexander Munro—joined in the project, which was a labour of love on all our parts—the expenses of materials alone being defrayed from

[1] *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 197.

the building fund. Each of the five painters took one window bay, and the sculptor the stone shield above the porch, and the work proceeded merrily in concert for five months.

"The subject taken for illustration throughout was the ancient romance of the Morte d'Arthur, and the pictures were painted on a large scale in distemper. The roof was also covered with a vast pattern-work of grotesque creatures by Morris, assisted by amateur workmen, who offered on all hands, chiefly University men who stayed in Oxford that 'Long' for that purpose."[1]

Unfortunately, "the purpose it was intended for" was not the only thing which Rossetti and his friends had failed to take into consideration. The brickwork was not damp-proof, and no ground was laid over it except a coat of white-wash. Even in 1858 the paintings had begun to be defaced, and little now remains except fitful gleams of colour—telling of famous friendships and noble enthusiasms, but in their decay telling also of the failure that is appointed for zeal without knowledge and enthusiasm without forethought. Ruskin, whose knowledge of the methods of ancient wall-painting was ample, can hardly have expected much good of this experiment of painting in distemper on a naked wall. He was caught, however, as all others were, by Rossetti's enthusiasm, and offered to pay him for a second painting in another of the bays, "provided there's no absolute nonsense in it, and the trees are like trees, and the stones like stones." But he had misgivings. "You know," he wrote to Rossetti's brother, "the fact is they're all the least bit crazy, and it's very difficult to manage them."

[1] From a letter to Alexander Gilchrist, printed in *Anne Gilchrist: her Life and Writings*, 1887, p. 90. This letter, of which only a portion is here cited, is the fullest contemporary account of the matter. See also "A Chapter from a Painter's Reminiscence: The Oxford Circle," by Val Prinsep, R.A., in the *Magazine of Art* for February 1904 (pp. 167–172). The best account of the subsequent history of the ill-fated paintings is in J. W. Mackail's *Life of William Morris*, vol. i. pp. 117–126. Rossetti's account of Morris's assistants is not quite accurate. In the *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 1904, vol. i. p. 168, a letter is quoted recording that Ruskin, on coming down to see the work, "pronounced Rossetti's picture to be 'the finest piece of colour in the world,' and 'chooses Edward's next to Rossetti's.'"

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There are few episodes in the literary and artistic history of England in the nineteenth century more interesting than the story of the wall-paintings of the Oxford Union, which brings together so many illustrious names, and speaks of so many ideals and aspirations. The tradition of the art of wall-painting had unfortunately been lost; but the co-operation of many artists in the decoration of a single building, their enthusiasm, their search for a Guinevere and its romantic sequel, and their merry humours recall many a page in Vasari. "This jovial campaign," Rossetti called it; and many are the anecdotes told of the innocent hilarities which enlivened it.[1]

Meanwhile at the Museum another revival of mediæval conditions was in progress. Woodward brought over, as already stated, many of his Irish workmen with him. Of these the most talented was O'Shea, whose artistic talent and ready wit greatly delighted Ruskin. O'Shea was one of the successful competitors for a prize which Ruskin offered in 1858 for an historical sculpture, and it was he who carved the window which Ruskin designed.[2] But in large measure the Irish workmen were left to their own devices. "Every morning," says Mr. Tuckwell, "came the handsome red-bearded brothers Shea, bearing plants from the Botanic Garden, to reappear under their chisels in the rough-hewn capitals of the pillars."[3] Animals, as well as plants, sprang to life under their hands. It was a great delight to Ruskin to be assured by the architects that the interest given to the workmen by the variety of their work so increased the efficiency of the labour that capitals of various design could be executed cheaper than capitals to uniform pattern.[4] The comfort and improvement of the workmen were not uncared for. Acland had secured the building of an institute, with reading-rooms and other conveniences, for the men. It was here, on an evening in April 1856, that Ruskin delivered an address, enlarging on

[1] See, for instance, Tuckwell's *Reminiscences of Oxford*, p. 50.
[2] See above, p. 376, and *Sesame and Lilies*, § 103.
[3] *Reminiscences of Oxford*, p. 49.
[4] *A Joy for Ever*, § 32.

the scope for originality and interest which workmen would find in buildings designed on such principles as those which governed the Oxford Museum.

The workmen's originality was not always, however, acceptable to the authorities. Ruskin in one of his Oxford lectures recalled the offence which was taken, when the first sculptures appeared on the windows of the Museum, at "the unnecessary introduction of cats."[1] But there were worse offences against conventional taste still:—

"O'Shea rushed into my house one afternoon (says Acland[2]) and—in a state of wild excitement—related as follows:—'The Master of the University,' cried he, 'found me on my scaffold just now.' 'What are you at?' says he. 'Monkeys,' says I. 'Come down directly,' says he; 'you shall not destroy the property of the University.' 'I work as Mr. Woodward orders me.'"

O'Shea was dismissed, but not before he had taken his revenge:—

"I found him on a single ladder in the porch, wielding heavy blows such as one imagines the genius of Michael Angelo might have struck when he was first blocking out the design of some immortal work. 'What are you doing, Shea? I thought you were gone.' Striking on still, Shea shouted—'Parrhots and Owwls! Parrhots and Owwls! Members of Convocation!' There they were, blocked out alternately. What could I do? 'Well,' I said, meditatively, 'Shea, you must knock their heads off.' 'Never,' says he. 'Directly,' said I. Their heads went. Their bodies, not yet evolved, remain to testify to the humour, the force, the woes, the troubles, in the character and art of our Irish brethren."

It is like a piece of the Middle Ages; just such a story may one read into many a grotesque and grinning gargoyle of some old cathedral.

Such of the windows as are carved are decorated entirely with representations of animal or vegetable life. Over the doorway is carved in low relief the figure of an angel bearing in his right hand a book—the open book of Nature—and

[1] *Aratra Pentelici*, § 134.

[2] In Appendix ii. to the 1893 edition of *The Oxford Museum*.

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in his left, three living cells—typical of the mysteries of life. The detached building on the spectator's right, constructed for a chemical laboratory, recalls the famous kitchen at Glastonbury. (This portion of the Museum has, however, been somewhat altered from its original form.) Entering by the central door, one passes on either side, sculptured on capitals of the pillars, the parrots and owls aforesaid. We then find ourselves in a large quadrangular hall, covered by a glass roof which is supported on cast-iron columns. The ornaments of the spandrels are in wrought-iron. Here, again, Ruskin's great principle of ornamentation is carried out. The representation is of interwoven branches, with leaf and flower and fruit, of various trees of native or exotic growth. The same principle is applied in various parts of the minor decorations—in the capitals, and in the trefoils of the girders, there nestle leaves of elm, brier, water-lily, passion-flower, ivy, and holly. The central court is surrounded by an open arcade of two storeys. On the ground-floor are thirty-three piers and thirty shafts; on the upper, thirty-three piers and ninety-five shafts. The shafts were carefully selected, under the direction of the Professor of Geology (the late Professor Phillips), in order to furnish examples of many of the most important rocks of the British Isles. The capitals and bases represent various groups of plants and animals, arranged for the most part according to their natural orders. On massive corbels, projecting from the front of the piers, are placed the statues of great men of science.

Such was in brief outline the building[1] which was gradually rising during these years (1855–59). It embodied some of Ruskin's dearest principles; but as the work progressed a certain feeling of disappointment crept over those who were responsible for it. Ruskin felt that there was something wrong, but for some time was not quite sure what it was. The spectator who examines the principal façade is struck by an effect as of something meagre and

[1] An account of the building with illustrations may be seen in C. L. Eastlake's *History of the Gothic Revival in England*, pp. 283–287.

pinched. This is largely caused by the severity, flatness, and lack of richness in the central doorway. It was Woodward's hope to have a recessed and richly-carved porch. Woolner prepared a drawing for the proposed porch, with niches for statues as Ruskin desired,[1] but Convocation refused to sanction the expenditure, and the scheme was abandoned. Again, the decoration of the windows is not completely carried out. Of the six in the upper storey to the right, as one faces the centre of the façade, the first is alone carved; in the lower row, one is begun, the others are left undecorated. On the other side, four of the six in the upper row are done, and again one only below. In the interior the same incompleteness may be observed. Of the 400 capitals and bases, about 300 remained uncarved in Ruskin's time, though during the last few years the work has been continued.

It was in order to explain the design and purpose of the Museum, and in the hope of enlisting further public support, that Acland and Ruskin prepared the little book entitled *The Oxford Museum*, first published in April 1859. Ruskin's contributions consisted of two letters. In the first he vindicates the adoption of the Gothic design, and explains the spirit of the decorations. Incidentally he repeats that plea for a more public-spirited patronage in the arts which he had put forward in *The Political Economy of Art*. In the second letter he points out how much the building was likely to suffer from inadequate funds; notices the impossibility of summoning at a moment's call a sufficient number of duly qualified craftsmen; and supports, with much eloquence and earnestness, the plea for enriching the doorway. In conclusion he claims recognition and gratitude for the Museum, rather as an example than as in itself a perfect specimen of the Gothic which he loved; "the building, the first exponent of the recovered truth, will only be the more venerated the more it is excelled." In writing this passage, Ruskin had in his mind more than he

[1] Woolner's drawing was presented by Acland to the University Galleries. The carvings over the arch and in the spandrels of the actual door were done by Woolner without remuneration.

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cared to say at the time. Many years later, in a public lecture within the walls of the Museum, he explained frankly in what ways the building had "failed signally of being what he hoped." He had never meant, he explained, that "a handsome building could be built of common brickbats," or that "you could secure a great national monument of art by letting loose the first lively Irishman you could get hold of."[1] But the Museum—with all its defects—is of special interest in a survey of Ruskin's life and work, for as a building it was in some sort a practical and standing commentary "On the Nature of Gothic Architecture: and herein of the True Functions of the Workman in Art." Thus did the *Stones of Venice* have their living influence on the stones of Oxford.

At this time his College conferred a signal honour upon him. In 1858 Honorary Studentships were created at Christ Church, and on December 6 the first election was held. Those chosen for the compliment were Henry Acland, Cornewall Lewis, Gladstone, Gore Ouseley, and Ruskin. This was a distinction of which Ruskin was always proud.

[1] *Readings in "Modern Painters."*

CHAPTER XXIII

HOME AND FRIENDS

"I have had, Heaven be thanked, many and true friends, young and old, who have been of boundless help and good to me,—nor I quite helpless to them; yet for none of whom have I ever obeyed George Herbert's mandate, 'Thy friend put in thy bosom; wear his eyes Still in thy heart, that he may see what's there.'"—*Præterita.*

NEITHER Ruskin's literary work, nor the other occupations which have been described in preceding chapters, prevented him during the years now under consideration from seeing something of his friends, from keeping up much correspondence with them, or from receiving visitors at his parents' house on Denmark Hill.

I

He was acquainted, in the first place, with the chief poets of the time—among them, with Coventry Patmore, a "greatly honoured and loved friend." He was godfather to one of the poet's sons, and presented another with a nomination to Christ's Hospital; and though he was not fond of dining out, he seems to have made an occasional exception in favour of Patmore's parties. At one of these, it is interesting to hear, the guests were Browning, Ruskin, and Tennyson. Of Patmore's poetry he was a warm admirer. The first of the following letters refers to *Tamerton Church Tower* and other poems; the second, to *The Betrothal*, the first part of *The Angel in the House*:—

"*June* 2, 1853.—I received the volume of poems, with the letter, and am very much interested in them; their versification is quite beautiful, and much of their thought. If they were

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Tennyson's, everybody would be talking of them, but they are a little too like Tennyson to attract attention as they should."

Circ. 1855.—"I am more and more pleased with the *Angel* You have neither the lusciousness nor the sublimity of Tennyson, but you have clearer and finer habitual expressions and more accurate thought. For finish and neatness I know nothing equal to bits of the *Angel:*

> 'As grass grows taller round a stone'—
> 'As moon between her lighted clouds'—

and such other lines. Tennyson is often quite sinfully hazy."

1860.—"We've just had some grapes sent us from the country, which appear to me in the present state of English weather phenomenal;—we send them therefore to you, as a poet, as an example of grapes grown entirely under the influence of Imagination, for they must have fancied all the sunshine that has ripened them. In case you have not got my yesterday's letter, I am glad of another bit of paper whereon to testify my intense delight with the new poem. My Mother is confined to bed just now, and I read it to her nearly all through yesterday, neither of us liking to stop. I want to see the *first* letter of advice which Mrs. Graham wrote to Jane. Also I want some more letters from Mildred. Knock out some of the midshipman, and put in some more Mildred, please, in next edition. I like poetry very well—but I like fun better. You certainly deserve to be made a Bishop. Won't the people who live in Closes, and the general Spirits of Mustiness, preside over your fortunes benevolently henceforward! Also all the people who have nothing to do but to be graceful. My word! when you go out this season you'll be petted. More than Mr. Punch himself."

This last letter refers to *Faithful for Ever* (1860), the third part of *The Angel in the House*. The poem was derided in some of the reviews for banality, and Ruskin wrote to defend his friend.[1] This defence of Patmore's simplicity of diction is one of Ruskin's most interesting pieces of literary criticism. He illustrates his point by comparing the simplicity of *The Odyssey* with the more "dignified" language of Pope's

[1] In *The Critic*, Oct. 27, 1860; the letter was reprinted in Ruskin's *Arrows of the Chace*.

version. As for the passages selected by the critics for ridicule, the poem contains, said Ruskin, "as all good art does, many very curious shortcomings (to appearance), and places of rest, or of dead colour, or of intended harshness," but these should not be taken out of connexion with the work as a whole. As well might a critic separately engrave, a bit of a coat-lappet, to prove a portrait-painter no artist or give the discords without their resolutions, to prove Mozart no musician. "I am bound, for my own part," said Ruskin in conclusion, "to express my obligation to Mr. Patmore, as one of my severest models and tutors in use of English, and my respect for him as one of the truest and tenderest thinkers who have ever illustrated the most important, because commonest, states of noble human love." Ruskin expressed a similar judgment both in his *Elements of Drawing* and in *Sesame and Lilies*. It is interesting to know that his admiration for the poem was not coloured by any bias for the friend. Patmore had published the first part of *The Angel* anonymously, and it was sent, again anonymously in the first place, to Ruskin. "Rossetti was with him a day or two after he received it; Ruskin asked him if he had seen, or knew anything about, 'a glorious book called *The Angel in the House*.'"

II

With Elizabeth Barrett, also, Ruskin was an admirer of the poet before he became acquainted with the writer. In the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, he had written of "the burning mystery of Coleridge," and "spirituality of Elizabeth Barrett," and this must have been "the word dropped in one of his books" of which Mrs. Browning afterwards said to him that she "picked it up and wore for a crown."[2] In 1852 Mr. and Mrs. Browning spent some months in London; and Ruskin went to call upon them,

[1] See a letter from Patmore to William Allingham in the *Memoirs and Correspondence of Patmore*, vol. ii. p. 179.

[2] *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, vol. ii. p. 191.

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and the visit was presently returned. "We went to Denmark Hill yesterday," wrote Mrs. Browning (September 1852), "to have luncheon with the Ruskins, and see the Turners, which, by the way, are divine. I like Mr. Ruskin much, and so does Robert. Very gentle, yet earnest,—refined and truthful. We count him among the valuable acquaintances made this year in England." [1] His reference, in the second volume of *Stones of Venice* (1853), to the "noble poem," *Casa Guidi Windows*, must have given Mrs. Browning much pleasure, for contemporary criticism was less favourable to the piece than it deserved. In private letters Ruskin mingled compliments with criticism:—

(*To* Mrs. Browning.) "Denmark Hill, *March* 4, 1855. . . . I have been lately reading your poems with an admiration which I fear you might be offended with me if I were to express to the full (I am not sure, by-the-bye, if I could) to yourself, but at least you will permit me to thank you for the hallowing and purifying influence of their every line—a *baptism* of most tender thoughts, which to me—whom many untoward circumstances of life have had too much power to harden and darken into deadness and bitterness—is of unspeakable preciousness. . . . I am going to bind your poems in a golden binding, and give them to my class of working men—as the purest and most exalting poetry in our language.

"Only, pray, in the next edition, alter that first verse of the *Drama of Exile*—Gehenna and when a [2]—and I must try to coax you to send some of the long compounded Greek words—which I, for one, can't understand so much as a syllable of—about their Greek business."

"The soul of a cynic," wrote Mrs. Browning in the course of her reply, "at its third stage of purification, might feel the value of gold laid on the binding of a book by the hand of John Ruskin." "When has a letter given me so much

[1] *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, vol. ii. p. 87.

[2] "Rejoice in the clefts of Gehenna,
My exiled, my host!
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
Heaven's empire was lost."

pleasure?" said Robert Browning on reading Ruskin's praises. But Ruskin pressed his criticisms :— CHAP. XXIII.

(*To* Mrs. Browning.) "*April* 6, 1855. . . . Assuredly you ought to consider with yourself, not merely how the poetry may be made absolutely as good as possible, but how also it may be put into a form which shall *do* as much good as possible; and if an expression, though really a good one, be such as to startle away a large number of careless readers, who otherwise might gradually have become careful ones, I think, unless there be very strong justification for it, you would agree with me in thinking it right to cancel that expression. For instance, the 'nympholeptic' in 'The Lost Bower.' I don't, myself, know what it means, and I haven't had time to look in the dictionary for it; and what is still worse, I don't expect to find it when I *do* look. . . .

"Among various works I have in hand at present, one is the endeavour to revive the art of Illumination. And the day before yesterday, I made my best workman, who has recovered thoroughly the art of laying on the gold, copy out the beginning of the Catarina to Camoens, which, on the whole, is my favourite, and which I mean to make one of the most glorious little burning books that ever had leaf turned by white finger."

Mrs. Browning defended her "nympholeptic" and the rest, and urged more generally that "the mass of readers *never* receive a poet (you, who are a poet yourself, must surely observe that) without intermediation; the few understand, appreciate, and distribute to the multitude below." Ruskin, in the course of his reply, retorted thus :—

(*To* Mrs. Browning.) "*June* 19*th*. . . . When you have succeeded in all your designs upon the English language, I might perhaps most graphically describe it as

> Tesseric, pentic, hectic, heptic,[1]
> Phœnico-dæmonic, and dyspeptic,
> Hipped-ic, Pipped-ic, East-wind-nipped-ic,
> Stiffened like styptic, doubled in diptych,
> Possi-kephaly-chersecliptic.

"That last line, by-the-bye, is really a triumph of expression—

[1] Anglice—all at sixes and sevens. [J. R.]

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at least it will be, when it is 'distributed to the multitude.' Apropos of that same distribution, it is all very well in theory, but if you over-bake your verses in the poetic fire, who is to chop them up? We will have it out, when we meet."

A little later in the year Mr. and Mrs. Browning were in England, and personal acquaintance with Ruskin was resumed. "We spent an evening with Ruskin," wrote Mrs. Browning, "who was gracious and generous, and strengthened all my good impressions. Robert took our young friend Leighton to see him afterwards and was as kindly received."[1] Browning's intercourse with Ruskin at this period may not have been without effect on the studies in poetry, which were to occupy some space in the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters*. In the latter volume Ruskin refers to the poet's "unerring" insight into the mind of the Middle Ages, and notices his "seemingly careless and too rugged lines." He seems to have read Browning with some difficulty at first, and this was a sore point with the poet's wife. He tried again, and wrote appreciatively. So they took courage to send him *Men and Women*—"not," wrote Mrs. Browning, "that you may say 'pleasant things' of them, or think yourself bound to say anything indeed, but that you may accept them as a sign of the esteem and admiration of both of us. I consider them on the whole an advance upon his former poems, and am ready to die at the stake for my faith in these last." Ruskin read the new poems, and sent a letter of appreciation which greatly pleased the poet—"a dear, too dear, and good letter," he called it to Rossetti.[2] But Ruskin had confessed his occasional bewilderment, and Browning in the course of his reply defended his "obscurity":—

"PARIS, *Dec. 10th*, '55. . . . For the deepnesses you think you discern,—may they be more than mere blacknesses! For the hopes you entertain of what may come of subsequent readings,—all success to them! For your bewilderment more especially noted—how

[1] *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, vol. ii. p. 210.

[2] *Letters from Robert Browning to various Correspondents*, edited by T. J. Wise, 1895, vol. i. p. 21.

shall I help *that?* We don't read poetry the same way, by the same law; it is too clear. I cannot begin writing poetry till my imaginary reader has conceded licences to me which you demur at altogether. I *know* that I don't make out my conception by my language, all poetry being a putting the infinite within the finite. You would have me paint it all plain out, which can't be; but by various artifices I try to make shift with touches and bits of outlines which *succeed* if they bear the conception from me to you. You ought, I think, to keep pace with the thought tripping from ledge to ledge of my 'glaciers,' as you call them; not stand poking your alpenstock into the holes, and demonstrating that no foot could have stood there;—suppose it sprang over there? . . ."

In the following year Mrs. Browning published *Aurora Leigh*, and Ruskin wrote enthusiastically about the poem:—

(*To* ROBERT BROWNING.) "DENMARK HILL, 27*th Nov.* 1856.—I think *Aurora Leigh* the greatest *poem* in the English language, unsurpassed by anything but Shakespeare—*not* surpassed by Shakespeare's *sonnets*, and therefore the greatest poem in the language. I write this, you see, very deliberately, straight, or nearly so, which is not common with me, for I am taking pains that you may not think (nor anybody else) that I am writing in a state of excitement; though there is enough in the poem to put one into such a state. I have not written immediately either, partly because I did not know if you were at Florence yet, partly because I wished to read the poem quite through. I like it *all*, familiar parts and unfamiliar, passionate and satirical, evil telling and good telling, philosophical and dramatic—all. It has one or two sharp blemishes, I think, in words, here and there, chiefly Greek. I think the 'Hat aside' a great discord in the opening—it tells on me like a crack in the midst of the sweetest fresco colour. *Phalanstery* I can't find in Johnson's dictionary, and don't know what it means. *Dynastick* hurts me like *a* stick—one or two passages in the art discussion I haven't made out yet. For the rest, I am *entirely* subdued and raised—to be Mrs. Browning's very humble votary and servant. . . ."

(*To* ROBERT BROWNING.) "28*th Dec.* 1856.—DEAR MR. BROWNING,—Out goes the Mr.—for I love you, and you know how much I honour you besides, so I needn't be respectful. I do hope, however,

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you have got my letter about *Aurora*—I sent one, ever so long ago, declaring my entire faith in it as the greatest poem in the English language. It has turned my head altogether and I can't talk of anything else. Last week I chanced to be sitting at dinner next to Lord Byron's granddaughter,[1] and quite forgetting who she was, I must needs come out with this energetic confession of faith in *Aurora Leigh* the moment it was named—to my great discomfiture the moment after, when I recollected whom I was talking to. But it's no use saying how magnificent it is, for you know, and the world is acceptant to the best of its ability. I have not seen, nor heard, a single bad word or sneer about it, and all the best people shout, with me, rapturously. . . ."

Among the best people who shouted rapturously was, as we shall hear in the next chapter, Rossetti. Many of Ruskin's letters of this period are addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Browning—"for I never think of you two separately," he said—and they were in the habit of writing joint letters to him. One of his letters was gloomy; perhaps he was sad in order that he might be comforted; in which case Mrs. Browning's reply (Jan. 1, 1859) gave him, in affectionate terms, what he needed. She tells him among other things that his sadness is only "the languor after victory"; and she speaks with delight of all he is "permitted to do for England in matters of art." Ruskin replied as follows:—

(*To* Mr. *and* Mrs. Browning.) "15*th Jan.* 1859. . . . I am much helped by all you say in your letters—being apt, in spite of all my certainty of being right in the main, to be seized with great fits of vexation;—for the truth is that my own proper business is not that of writing; I am never happy as I write; never want to utter for my own delight, as you singers do (with all your pretences to benevolence and all that, you know you like singing just as well as the nightingales). But *I'm* truly benevolent, miserably benevolent. For my own pleasure I should be collecting stones and mosses, drying and ticketing them—reading scientific books—walking all day long in the summer—going to plays, and what not, in winter—

[1] Lady Anne Milbanke (married, 1869, to Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt).

[2] *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, vol. ii. p. 299.

never writing nor saying a word—rejoicing tranquilly or intensely in pictures, in music, in pleasant faces, in kind friends. But now—about me there is this terrific absurdity and wrong going on. People kill my Turner with abuse of him—make rifle targets of my Paul Veroneses—make themselves, and me, unendurably wretched by all sorts of ridiculous doings—won't let me be quiet. I live the life of an old lady in a houseful of wicked children—can do nothing but cry out—they won't leave me to my knitting needles a moment. And this working in a way contrary to one's whole nature tells upon one at last—people never were meant to do it. They were meant to be able to give quiet pieces of advice to each other and show, without any advice, how things should be done properly (such as they had gift and liking for). But people were never meant to be always howling and bawling the right road to a generation of drunken cabmen, their heads up through the trap-door of the hansom, faces all over mud—no right road to be got gone upon after all—nothing but a drunken effort at turning, ending in ditch. I hope to get just one more howl executed, from which I hope great effects—upon the Moon—and then, see if I don't take to Kennel and Straw, comfortably. There was another thing in your letters comforting to me—your delightful want of patriotism—loving Italy so much ; for I sometimes think I am going quite wrong when I don't feel happy in coming home. I have a right to love Italy more now, since it has made Mrs. Browning so much stronger. Poor Italy, there won't be much of her left to love, I'm afraid, soon. . . ."

The year 1859 saw the Franco-Sardinian war for the liberation of Italy. Mrs. Browning's letters to Ruskin show her passionate enthusiasm for the Italian cause and her indignation with the anti-French sentiment in England. Here she and Ruskin were heartily in sympathy ; and "we thank you and love you," she wrote, "dear, dear Mr. Ruskin, more than ever for your good word about our Italy." Later in the year he took up his parable in the public press, and letters sent to the newspapers on the Italian Question, about which he wrote to Mrs. Browning, must, with some qualifications, have pleased her greatly. He was not indeed so optimistic about modern Italy as she, nor yet at all times so anti-Austrian ; but this correspondence is of interest as

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giving to him also some link in that "golden ring" which the English poetess made, as the Italian poet said, between Italy and England. In July came the Peace of Villafranca—a bitter disappointment, put what gloss upon it she might; Ruskin speaks of it, in letters of the time, as her death-warrant. The year 1860, which opened with the cession of Savoy and Nice to the Emperor Napoleon, witnessed presently Garibaldi's liberation of Southern Italy. On October 27 Lord John Russell sent his famous despatch to the British Minister to the Court of Sardinia justifying the King for furnishing the assistance of his arms to the Roman and Neapolitan States. The despatch was printed in the *Times* of November 5, and on reading it Ruskin at once wrote to Mrs. Browning:—

"*Nov.* 5. . . . I should hardly have had spirit to write to you even now, but that there is in to-day's paper at last something like a Voice from England. Late—how late! Yet, thank heaven, at last a voice, and I suppose she has been in an occult and cowardly way, yet still, positively, helping for some time back. I never thought to have to thank Lord John for anything; here, however, is—whether his own or not—the first piece of steady utterance we've had. Now, if Italy can only be true to herself; but alas, for her inveterate Idleness. What do you think she *can* do, in way of foodful, soulful work? However, with what oscillation or failure may be appointed for her, she will—as all nations will—now go forward, I believe, not Hades-way, as Carlyle says."

More correspondence followed. Mrs. Browning told him how greatly she enjoyed his letters, and in the last of them he says, "I'm going to write often now." That was on May 13, 1861. On June 29 she passed away. Her death was a great loss to Ruskin. "And there's Mrs. Browning gone, too," he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones (July 20), "who *was* a friend, and such a one; but one must not think about oneself in talking of her, it is all the Earth's loss." It was some time before he could bring himself to write a letter of condolence:—

(*To* Robert Browning.) "Lucerne, *Nov.* 17, 1861.—I do not know what others of your friends may have ventured to write or

to say to you. I could say nothing—*can* say nothing—but that I love you, and there are few people whom I do—and that when you care to see me, or hear from me, I shall thankfully come if I can, or write if I cannot. I think also I may venture to say this: that however enthusiastic the love, or devoted the respect, borne by all, whose respect or love was in any wise worthy of her, to Mrs. Browning, there was not one among them who more entirely and reverently shared in aim and hope with her than I: nor one who regards her loss with a more grave, enduring bitterness and completeness of regret—not the acute, consolable suffering of a little time, but the established sense of unredeemable, unparalleled loss, which will not pass away.

"I have been ill—not a little, neither; and am so still, more mentally than otherwise, however—and am little fit to face sad thoughts—not that I have many others to face. But I cannot write to you—indeed, of what should I write to you?—every way my superior in powers of thought, and of suffering."

III

Of Tennyson's poetry Ruskin was a great admirer, though he preferred the earlier to the later work. The references to Tennyson in Ruskin's books are numerous, and so also were they in his letters and conversation. "Perhaps one of the most wonderful pieces of *sight* in all poetry," he wrote to a friend (Dec. 3, 1859), "is—nay, that's just it; I was going to say a bit of Tennyson—the piece of Alp in the *Princess*, but Tennyson's all alike, one thing as perfect as another. What an epithet of elephants' trunks—'their serpent hands.'" That is in "Vivien"; the Alpine idyl, "Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height," was counted by the poet himself, too, as amongst his "most successful work."[1] In *The Two Paths* Ruskin wrote: "No description that I have ever given of anything is worth four lines of Tennyson." Patmore questioned this estimate, and Ruskin replied:—

"I assure you it is true. My *gift* is wholly rationalistic and deductive—my descriptions are genuine in emotion, but wholly

[1] *Memoir by his Son*, vol. i. p. 252.

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wanting in highest quality: and I am in all matters of this one mind, that four lines of Best is worth *any* quantity of Seconds. I've written a good deal about waterfalls—pneumatically enough. But the single line,

'That, like a broken purpose, waste in air,'

is worth all put together. . . . You'll see I *don't* depreciate myself in *all* ways."

To like effect, Mr. Wedderburn remembers Ruskin saying, at a breakfast-party to his diggers at Oxford, that "he would sacrifice nearly all his books to have written one of Tennyson's lines—the last line of *Will:* 'The city sparkles like a grain of salt.'" In 1855 Ruskin first wrote to Tennyson:—

"Denmark Hill, *March* 21.—Dear Mr. Tennyson,—I venture to write to you, because as I was talking about you with Mr. Woolner yesterday, he gave me more pleasure than I can express by telling me that you wished to see my Turners. By several untoward chances I have been too long hindered from telling you face to face how much I owe you. So you see at last I seize the wheel of fortune by its nearest spoke, begging you, with the heartiest entreaty I can, to tell me when you are likely to be in London, and to fix a day if possible that I may keep it wholly for you, and prepare my Turners to look their rosiest and best. Capricious they are as enchanted opals, but they must surely shine for you. Any day will do for me if you give me notice two or three days before; but please come soon, for I have much to say to you, and am eager to say it, above all to tell you how for a thousand things I am gratefully and respectfully yours, J. Ruskin."

I do not know whether Tennyson accepted the invitation, but it was either then or not very long afterwards, at Patmore's table, that they made personal acquaintance. Ruskin wrote again when *Maud* was being much criticised, to say "as a compliment to myself, not to you, that I think with you in all things about the war." In the same letter he pleaded—successfully—for the re-insertion of "Some one had blundered" in *The Light Brigade*. In 1858 Ruskin

and Tennyson met sometimes at Little Holland House. "I have just seen Ruskin," the poet wrote in his diary (Nov. 1858); "he says that the signor's (G. F. Watts) portrait of me is the grandest thing he has seen in that line; but so he said of Woolner's bust." In 1859 "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere" were published, and Ruskin sent his opinion of the new volume:— CHAP. XXIII.

"STRASBURG, *Sept.* 1859.—DEAR MR. TENNYSON,—I have had the *Idylls* in my travelling desk ever since I could get them across the water, and have only not written about them because I could not quite make up my mind about that increased quietness of style. I thought you would like a little to know what I felt about it, but did not quite know myself what I did feel. . . .

"The four songs seem to me the jewels of the crown, and bits come every here and there—the fright of the maid, for instance, and the 'In the darkness o'er her fallen head'—which seem to me finer than almost all you have done yet.

"As a description of various nobleness and tenderness the book is without price; but I shall always wish it had been nobleness independent of a romantic condition of externals in general. . . . Treasures of wisdom there are in it, and word-painting such as never was yet for concentration; nevertheless it seems to me that so great power ought not to be spent on visions of things past, but on the living present. For one hearer capable of feeling the depth of this poem I believe ten would feel a depth quite as great if the stream flowed through things nearer the hearer. And merely in the facts of modern life—not drawing-room, formal life, but the far-away and quite unknown growth of souls in and through any form of misery or servitude—there is an infinity of what men should be told, and what none but a poet can tell. I cannot but think that the intense, masterful, and unerring transcript of an actuality, and the relation of a story of any real human life as a poet would watch and analyze it, would make all men feel more or less what poetry was, as they felt what Life and Fate were in their instant workings.

"This seems to me the true task of the modern poet. And I think I have seen faces, and heard voices, by road and street side, which claimed or conferred as much as ever the loveliest or saddest of Camelot. As I watch them, the feeling continually weighs upon

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me, day by day, more and more, that not the grief of the world but the loss of it is the wonder of it. I see creatures so full of all power and beauty, with none to understand or teach or save them. The making in them of miracles, and all cast away, for ever lost as far as we can trace. And no 'in memoriam.' . . ."

In later years the two men occasionally met, and Tennyson followed Ruskin's excursions into literary criticism. The poet's son records a luncheon and gives some of the conversation. As Ruskin was taking his leave, Tennyson asked, "Do you know that most romantic of lyrics?" quoting the "It was a' for our rightfu' King" of Burns. "Do I not?" said Ruskin; "I am so glad you like it, Tennyson; I place it among the best things ever done by any one." Tennyson was asked what he thought of Ruskin's appreciation of Byron in *Fiction, Fair and Foul*.[1] He agreed with it in ranking Byron's poetry very high, but he did not find much in the particular poem —*The Island*—from which Ruskin had quoted admiringly. On the other hand, he thought very good Ruskin's remarks on Shakespeare, in the same essay. He read Ruskin's *Elements of Prosody* also, and agreed with the criticism of a particular passage in Coleridge. Tennyson's estimate of Ruskin's own writing has already been cited (p. 353).

IV

Another poet whose work Ruskin admired, and whose friendly acquaintance he valued, was James Russell Lowell. Professor Norton had sent him Lowell's poems. "I have written your initials and mine," Ruskin wrote (Oct. 24, 1858), "in the two volumes of Lowell (how delightful the new prefaces to the *Fable!*). He does me more good in my dull fits than anybody, and makes me hopeful again. What a beautiful face he has!" Lowell at this time was editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and asked Ruskin to write something for it:—

(*To* J. R. Lowell.) "*Dec.* 5, 1859.—It was indeed a happy morning for me this, bringing me your letter—besides a delightful

[1] *William Allingham: a Diary*, 1907, pp. 300, 326.

one from Norton. For many causes lately I have been needing some help, and this from you is the greatest I could have, and best, though there are few days pass without my getting some help from you and finding something strange and beautiful, bearing on the questions which are teasing us here in the old world; with none of the rest of age, only its querulousness and sleeplessness. I am myself in a querulous and restless state enough,—what head I have nearly turned, or turned at least in the sense in which the cook predicates it of our cream when she can't get any butter. I can get no butter at present (couldn't even get any bread at two guineas a page), being on the whole vacantly puzzled and paralyzed, able only to write a little now and then of old thoughts, to finish *Modern Painters*, which *must* be finished. Whenever I can write at all this winter I must take up that, for it is tormenting me, always about my neck. If no accident hinders it will be done this spring, and then I will see if there is anything I can say clearly enough to be useful in my present state of mystification. I told Norton in my last letter a few of the things I am trying to find out, and I've found out none yet. I like other people's writings so much better than my own—Tennyson's, Carlyle's, yours, Helps's, and one or two others'es—that I feel much driven to silence and quiet, trying to paint rather than write more. In the meantime *Modern Painters* is giving me more trouble than I can well stand, and I *can't* do anything else till it is out of the way. . . ."

"My dear friend and teacher," Ruskin called Lowell in the last volume of *Modern Painters;* and Lowell, on his side, in a published address on the choice of books, hoped "to see the works of Ruskin within the reach of every artisan among us," adding in another lecture that Ruskin held "a divining rod of exquisite sensitiveness for the rarer and more recondite sources of purifying enjoyment as well as for those more obvious and nearer to the surface."

Ruskin had first seen Charles Eliot Norton in November 1855 when he had come with a letter of introduction to Denmark Hill, as many American visitors came, to see the famous collection of Turner drawings. In the following summer they met by chance, as Ruskin has described, on the lake of Geneva, and walked together, a day or two later,

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"up the winding path among the mountain meadows of Sallanches." "Thus I became possessed," says Ruskin, "of my second friend, after Dr. John Brown, and of my first real tutor." "The friendship had begun," says Norton, "which was to last till the end of life." Correspondence with Norton becomes frequent from this point onwards:—

(*To* C. E. Norton.) "*Dec.* 28, 1856. . . . I hope the enjoyment of that damp and discordant city and that desolate and diseaseful Campagna, of which your letter assures me, may be received as a proof of your own improved health, and brightness of heart and imagination. I think, perhaps, I abuse Rome more because it is as sour grapes to me. When I was there I was a sickly and very ignorant youth; and I should be very glad, now, if I could revisit what I passed in weariness or contempt; and I do envy you (sitting as I am just now in the Great Western hotel at Paddington, looking out upon a large number of panes of grey glass, some iron spikes, and a brick wall) that walk in sight of Sabine hills. Still, reasoning with myself in the severest way, and checking whatever malice against the things I have injured, or envy of you, there may be in the feelings with which I now think of Rome, these appear to me incontrovertible and accurate conclusions,—that the streets are damp and mouldy where they are not burning; that the modern architecture is fit only to put on a Twelfth cake in sugar (*e.g.*, the churches at the Quattro Fontane); that the old architecture consists chiefly of heaps of tufa and bricks; that the Tiber is muddy; that the Fountains are fantastic; that the Castle of St. Angelo is too round; that the Capitol is too square; that St. Peter's is too big; that all the other churches are too little; that the Jews' quarter is uncomfortable; that the English quarter is unpicturesque; that Michael Angelo's Moses is a monster; that his Last Judgment is a mistake; that Raphael's Transfiguration is a failure; that Apollo Belvidere is a public nuisance; that the bills are high; the malaria strong; the dissipation shameful; the bad company numerous; the Sirocco depressing; the Tramontana chilling; the Levante parching; the Ponente pelting; the ground unsafe; the politics perilous, and the religion pernicious. . . ."

(*To the same.*) "*Nov.* 29, 1858. . . . I'm better now, a little, but doubtful and puzzled about many things. Lowell does me more

good than anybody, what between encouraging me and making me laugh. Mr. Knott makes me laugh more than anything I know in the world—the punning is so rapid and rich, there's nothing near it but Hood, and Hood is so awful under his fun that one never can laugh. *Questi poveri*—what are we to do with them? You don't mean to ask me that seriously? Make pets of them, to be sure—they were sent to be our dolls, like the little girls' wax ones—only we can't pet them until we get good floggings for some people, as well."

(*To the same.*) "*Dec.* 28, 1858. . . . I rather want good wishes just now, for I am tormented by what I cannot get said, nor done. I want to get all the Titians, Tintorets, Paul Veroneses, Turners, and Sir Joshuas in the world into one great fireproof Gothic gallery of marble and serpentine. I want to get them all perfectly engraved. I want to go and draw all the subjects of Turner's 19,000 sketches in Switzerland and Italy, elaborated by myself. I want to get everybody a dinner who hasn't got one. I want to macadamize some new roads to Heaven with broken fools'-heads. I want to hang up some knaves out of the way, not that I've any dislike to them, but I think it would be wholesome for them, and for other people, and that they would make good crow's meat. I want to play all day long and arrange my cabinet of minerals with new white wool. I want somebody to amuse me when I'm tired. I want Turner's pictures not to fade. I want to be able to draw clouds, and to understand how they go, and I can't make them stand still, nor understand them—they all go sideways, πλάγιαι[1] (what a fellow that Aristophanes was! and yet to be always in the wrong in the main, except in his love for Æschylus and the country. Did ever a worthy man do so much mischief on the face of the Earth?) Farther, I want to make the Italians industrious, the Americans quiet, the Swiss romantic, the Roman Catholics rational, and the English Parliament honest—and I can't do anything and don't understand what I was born for. I get melancholy—overeat myself, oversleep myself—get pains in the back—don't know what to do in any wise. What with that infernal invention of steam, and gunpowder, I think the fools may be a puff or barrel

[1] *Clouds*, 325. See the Preface to ed. 2 of *Modern Painters*, vol. i., where Ruskin quotes and comments upon the passage.

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or two too many for us. Nevertheless, the gunpowder has been doing some work in China and India. . . .

"*P.S.*—I want also to give lectures in all the manufacturing towns, and to write an essay on poetry, and to teach some masters of schools to draw; and I want to be perfectly quiet and undisturbed and not to think, and to draw, myself, all day long, till I can draw better; and I want to make a dear High Church friend of mine sit under Mr. Spurgeon."

(*To the same.*) "THUN, *Aug.* 15, 1859. . . . It's very odd I don't keep writing to you continually, for you are almost the only friend I have left. I mean the only friend who understands or feels with me. I've a good many radical half friends, but I'm not a radical and they quarrel with me—by the way, so do you a little—about my governing schemes. Then all my Tory friends think me worse than Robespierre. Rossetti and the P.R.B. are all gone crazy about the Morte d'Arthur. I don't believe in Evangelicalism—and my Evangelical (once) friends now look upon me with as much horror as on one of the possessed Gennesaret pigs. Nor do I believe in the Pope—and some Roman Catholic friends, who had great hopes of me, think I ought to be burned. Domestically, I am supposed worse than Blue Beard; artistically, I am considered a mere packet of squibs and crackers. I rather count upon Lowell as a friend, though I've never seen him. He and the Brownings and you. Four—well—it's a good deal to have—of *such*, and I won't grumble—but then you're in America, and no good to me—except that I'm in a perfect state of gnawing remorse about not writing to you; and the Brownings are in Italy, and I'm as alone as a stone on a high glacier, dropped the wrong way, instead of among the moraine. Some day, when I've quite made up my mind what to fight for, or whom to fight, I shall do well enough, if I live, but I haven't made up my mind what to fight for—whether, for instance, people ought to live in Swiss cottages and sit on three-legged and one-legged stools; whether people ought to dress well or ill; whether ladies ought to tie their hair in beautiful knots; whether Commerce or Business of any kind be an invention of the Devil or not; whether Art is a Crime or only an Absurdity; whether Clergymen ought to be multiplied, or exterminated by arsenic, like rats; whether in general we are getting on, and if so

where we are going to; whether it is worth while to ascertain any of these things; whether one's tongue was ever made to talk with or only to taste with. (Send to Mr. Knott's house[1] and get me some raps if you can.)

"Meantime, I'm copying Titian as well as I can, that being the only work I see my way to at all clearly, and if I can ever succeed in painting a bit of flesh, or a coil of hair, I'll begin thinking 'what next.' . . ."

V

Among the friends who disliked Ruskin's incursions into politics was Acland, and to him the following apology was addressed:—

"*April* 27, 1856. . . . I enjoyed the quiet time you were kind enough to spare to me at Henley as much as you did—perhaps more—as I was under no panic about *your* politics. And if you consider the following *facts* I don't think you will see ground to fear mine.

"First. I have a clear mathematical head. This is just as certain as that I have a head at all, which I suppose is objectively certain. I know it is a mathematical head, because at my little go I offered to do any problem in Euclid's three first books without a diagram, writing it out by reference to an imaginary diagram in my head. I can do that to this day, to almost any extent; that is to say, reason out any geometrical question without pen or paper, and dictate its statement blindfold.[2]

"Secondly. I have reasoned out a good many principles of general philosophy and political economy by myself, and I have *always* found myself in concurrence with Bacon and Adam Smith as soon as I had settled said principles to my own satisfaction; and as I believe those two people to have been no fools, I see no reason for concluding that I am one myself.

"Thirdly. I am forced by precisely the same instinct to the consideration of political questions that urges me to examine the laws of architectural or mountain forms. I cannot help doing so; the

[1] In Lowell's rollicking poem, Mr. Knott's house was haunted by "raps that unwrapped mysteries."

[2] See above, p. 62.

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questions suggest themselves to me, and I am *compelled* to work them out. I cannot rest till I have got them clear.

"Fourthly. I am perfectly honest in all my purposes. It is precisely and accurately against my own dearest interests that I am acting in praising Turner. No landed proprietor ever coveted land more earnestly than I covet possession of Turners. Yet I am every day putting my whole strength into the declaration of their merit to others, raising their price to myself. I have proved a right to say, therefore, that I am upright in my other purposes.

"Fifthly. I am good-natured, and desirous of making people about me happy, if I can. There are many people who are *proudly* honest, yet hard-hearted: I am *instinctively* honest, yet kind-hearted. I do not mean that I am affectionate—that is to say, dependent for my pleasure on the society of others,—far from it; but I am kind, in a general way, to all human creatures.

"Sixthly. I am wholly unambitious. I don't mean I am not vain—that is, fond of praise; I am *intensely* fond of it, and very much pained by blame. But I don't care for Power, unless it be to be useful with; the mere feeling of power and responsibility is a bore to me, and I would give any amount of authority for a few hours of Peace.

"Seventhly. I have perfect leisure for inquiry into whatever I want to know. I am untroubled by any sort of care or anxiety, unconnected with any particular interest or group of persons, unaffected by feelings of Party, of Race, of social partialities, or of early prejudice, having been bred a Tory—and gradually developed myself into an Indescribable thing—certainly *not* a Tory.

"Eighthly. I am by nature and instinct Conservative, loving old things because they are old, and hating new ones merely because they are new. If, therefore, I bring forward any doctrine of Innovation, assuredly it must be against the grain of me; and this in political matters is of infinite importance.

"Lastly, I have respect for religion, and accept the practical precepts of the Bible to their full extent.

"Consider now all those qualifications one by one. Consider how seldom it is that they all are likely to meet in one person, and whether there be, on the whole, chance of greater good or evil accruing to people in general from the political speculations of such a person.

"I ought to have added one more qualification to the list. I know the Laws of *Work*, and this is a great advantage over *Idle* Speculations.

"Against all these qualifications you will perhaps allege one—at first ugly-looking—disqualification. 'You live out of the world, and cannot know *anything* about it.'

"I believe that is almost the *only* thing you can say, but it does sound ugly at first, and sweeping. I answer, that just because I live out of it, I know more about it. Who do you suppose know most about the lake of Geneva—I, or the Fish in it? It is quite true the Fish know a thing or two that I don't—certain matters about feeding places, deep holes, and various other characters of Bottom. Nevertheless as to the general Nature of the lake of Geneva, future prospects of it, and probabilities of all said fish ever being entirely broiled by a volcanic explosion, or petrified in their beloved bottom by advance of delta, I know more than they.

"I do not suppose you will answer—as other people might—that I am too conceited to know anything about it. There are two kinds of self-estimation—a fool's, and that which every man who knows his business has of himself. They look like each other in expression, but they are not the same. . . ."

VI

A friend who entirely approved of Ruskin's political outlook was Carlyle; and he was not quite a friend—a mentor, rather. "What can you say of Carlyle," said Ruskin to Froude, "but that he was born in the clouds and struck by the lightning?"—"'struck by the lightning,'" adds Froude, "not meant for happiness, but for other ends; a stern fate which nevertheless in the modern world, as in the ancient, is the portion dealt out to some individuals on whom the heavens have been pleased to set their mark."[1] Carlyle was the revered Master; Ruskin the beloved disciple. A visitor to Chelsea describes Carlyle as reclining on a sofa, while Ruskin knelt on the floor, leaning over Carlyle as they

[1] *Thomas Carlyle: a History of the First Forty Years of his Life*, 1882, vol. ii. p. 475.

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talked, and kissing his hand on taking leave.[1] The description is typical of their relations. I do not know when, or how, they first met—it was certainly before 1851, as is proved by Carlyle's letter of March 9 in that year, about *The Stones of Venice*.[2] The arts were not much in Carlyle's way, but he found Ruskin's talk an exception :—

"Ruskin was here the other night," he wrote to his brother (November 27, 1855);—"a bottle of beautiful *soda-water*,—something like Rait of old times, only with an intellect of tenfold vivacity. He is very pleasant company now and then. A singular element,—very curious to look upon,—in the present puddle of the intellectual artistic so-called 'world' in these parts at this date."[3]

At this time Ruskin was not an infrequent visitor to Carlyle and his wife. "It was a *relief*," wrote Mrs. Carlyle in her journal (May 15, 1856), "when Ruskin called for us, to go to a great soirée at Bath House. *There* I found my tongue, and used it 'not wisely but too well.'"[4] Ruskin did not love that tongue, and was heard in after years to speak of her as "the shrew."[5] But he admired her cleverness, and to her some of his best letters were addressed. First, however, I must give one to Carlyle :—

"Denmark Hill, *Jan.* 23, 1855.—Dear Mr. Carlyle,—I had some thoughts of making a true *foray* upon you this evening—having been rendered desperate by Woolner's telling me that it was *three years* since I had seen you—but this morning it looks so much as if, could I once get to Chelsea, you might have some difficulty in getting quit of me again till a thaw came, that I will not venture. Only I warn you that I really must come and see you one of these days—if you won't come and see *us*.

"People are continually accusing me of borrowing other men's thoughts, and not confessing the obligation. I don't think there is anything of which I am more utterly incapable than of this meanness ;

[1] *William Allingham : a Diary*, 1907, p. 275.

[2] Chapter xv., above, p. 296.

[3] *New Letters of Carlyle*, 1904, vol. ii. p. 177.

[4] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 1903, vol. ii. p. 97.

[5] "Ruskin and Girlhood : Some Happy Reminiscences," by L. Allen Harker, in *Scribner's Magazine*, Nov. 1906.

but it is very difficult always to know how much one is indebted to other people, and it is always most difficult to explain to others the degree in which a stronger mind may guide you, without your having at least intentionally borrowed this or the other definite thought. The fact is, it is very possible for two people to hit *sometimes* on the same thought, and I have over and over again been somewhat vexed as well as surprised at finding that what I really *had*, and *knew* I had, worked out for myself, corresponded very closely to things that you had said much better. I entreat you not to think when (if you have ever patience to do so) you glance at anything I write—and when you come, as you must sometimes, on bits that look like bits of yourself spoiled—to think that I have been mean enough to borrow from you knowingly, and without acknowledgment. How much your general influence has told upon me, I know not, but I always confess it, or rather boast of it, in conversation about you, and you will see what—considering the way malicious people catch at such confessions—is certainly a very frank one, at the close of the lecture of which I send you a *Builder* containing a report. I have marked the passage, p. 639.[1]

"With sincere regards to Mrs. Carlyle, believe me, my dear Sir, most faithfully yours, J. Ruskin."

(*To* Mr. *and* Mrs. Carlyle.) "*March* 1859.—When may I come and see you? Friday—Saturday—Monday—or Tuesday—evening? I've been in Yorkshire. In, also, lands of figurative rock and moor—hard work—and peat-bog puzzle. No end visible. Not getting on with German. *Frederick* yet unread. Nothing done. All sorts of things gone worse undone—Stitches run down. Entirely dim notions of what ought to be done. Except—that I ought to come and tell you all about it."

He had sent as a gift to Cheyne Row a print of Dürer's Melencolia:—

(*To* Mrs. Carlyle.) "*Dec.* 1859.—I am so very glad you liked the things, and especially the flowers—for indeed the Melancholy is not exactly likeable. What it means—no one knows. 'Cavernous meaning' is just the word for it. In the main, it evidently means

[1] A lecture at the Architectural Museum on "Decorative Colour": Library Edition, vol. xii. p. 507.

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the full sense of the terror, mystery, turmoil, responsibility of the world, ending in great awe and sadness—and perpetual labour—(as opposed to French *légèreté*) lightly crowned with budding bay—winged, as in true angelic service. (The Wolf hound of fiercer sorrow laid asleep at her feet.) Strong bodied. Having the Keys of all knowledge. Compare Tennyson's:—

> 'Seemed to touch it into leaf,
> The Words were hard to understand.'

—Ever affectionately yours, J. Ruskin.

"Poor little Nero! But he will love you just as much, even when he is blind—and move his little paws just as prettily."

On the tour of 1856, which gave Ruskin the friendship of Norton, he and his parents met also Dr. and Mrs. Simon. The acquaintance ripened between them all into a very warm friendship—celebrated by Ruskin, as usual, with familiar names. John Simon became, from the identity of Christian name, his "dear brother John," and Mrs. Simon his "dear P. R. S." (Pre-Raphaelite Sister and Sibyl), or more shortly "S." "She, with her husband," says Ruskin in *Præterita*, "love Savoy even more than I": and "She, in my mother's old age, was her most deeply trusted friend." John Simon, M.D., President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and F.R.S. (created K.C.B. in 1887), of Anglo-French descent, was, as is well known, one of the chief masters of sanitary science in this country, and in the year before the Ruskins met him had been appointed to the newly created post of Medical Officer to the Privy Council. It is to his reports made in this capacity that Ruskin more than once refers in his books. He had in 1848 married Miss Jane O'Meara. "Her warm Irish nature was concealed from strangers," says Lady Burne-Jones, who with her husband owed friendship with Sir John and Lady Simon to Ruskin's introduction, "by a singularly impassive manner: but, that once penetrated, her fine qualities revealed themselves: amongst them were constancy in friendship and a rare courage and magnanimity in times of trial."[1] There

[1] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. p. 257.

are other friends who may more conveniently be introduced at a later stage in our story; here a few letters may be added as specimens of Ruskin's large and various correspondence at this time:—

(*To* Mrs. Hugh Blackburn.) "*March* 17 (*circ.* 1855–56).—I sent you a horrible scrawl of a letter the other day; and put off the answer to your interesting questions about people and places, not because I wanted time to think over them, but because I wanted to explain why I must answer at random—or nearly so. . . .

"In the Bible, then, my favourite, on the whole, is Job—Daniel is a little too high above me—and John too fond of saying the same thing over and over again. I should have liked excessively to have known Habakkuk, but, *not* having known him, cannot quite say whether I should have liked him or not. My chief antipathy, putting *monsters*—Judas and Nabal and such like—out of the question, is Jacob.

"In History, I am absolutely at a dead stand between Cromwell and St. Louis; but I suppose if I had known them both I should have *drawn* a little more to St. Louis. I have never examined the histories of rascals enough to make a choice. The first who comes into my head is King John.

"In Romance. I am again divided between Sir Charles Grandison and Don Quixote. If Don Q. had not been mad, I should have liked *him* best—on the whole I believe I do. Of ladies—Imogen. I had liked to have insulted the blessed creature and you, by saying *where* she was. For romantic antipathies there are, of course, too many well-got-up monsters to render the choice either easy or interesting. I think Glossin in *Guy Mannering* as disagreeable a fellow as one often comes across.

"Lastly for places. . . . My greatest horror in Europe is the main street in Carlsruhe. If, for an affection, you want a *narrower* answer than Chamouni, I am a little puzzled between the top of the Montanvert and a small rock on the flank of the Breven. I have been *happiest* on the Montanvert, but *oftenest* at this rock, where I generally pass my evenings when at Chamouni. Next to the valley of Chamouni, and even running it rather hard, I love the little Scaliger churchyard at Verona. I think I have been

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more intensely happy for a little while in the churchyard, but not so enduringly. Now, please, tell me yours."

(*To* Mrs. John Simon.) "*Nov.* 28, 1857.—My dear S.,—I just write a line to relieve your mind, and say I understand all that about the inspiration, and think it helpful and nice; and I think you are quite right in the main about Turner. But the odd thing is that there should have been plenty men of irregular or even wicked lives who could yet draw a *pretty* face sometimes, or a handsome one; and besides, they show degradation in all they do of animals or living creatures, as much at least as in their human figures. But Turner discerns the most exquisite subtleties of beauty in a fawn—the utmost majesty in an eagle—the utmost naïvety and innocence in a donkey—and yet never draws *one* beautiful or even pretty human face or form. I am so much the more struck with this at present that I see his hard *tries* to do it sometimes—to paint the landing of Prince Regents—the opening of the Walhalla—or the parting of Romeo and Juliet—and it seems so amazing to me that he should be able to paint a fawn rightly, but not an Italian girl—and a pig, but not a Prince Regent—and a donkey, but not a German philosopher. I don't know when I have been so entirely puzzled about anything—I've got the toothache with thinking over it."

(*To* Dr. Chambers.) "*Jan.* 3, 1859. . . . Of course the first thing one has to urge on a young Prince is in this as in all other matters, that he should think for himself. Not, that is, take up an opinion carelessly, and maintain it positively, because it is his, but that he should himself do the hard and painful work of making the thought really his own, and for himself testing its truth. A King is, of course, exposed to all kinds of efforts to deceive him; the interest in obtaining his approval is so great that all mean persons are for ever striving to blind him to the merits of others and recommend their own—impartial teaching is a thing almost impossible in his case. I am myself rough and bold enough in general in what I say, but I never would say so hard a thing of a living artist in the Prince's hearing as I would say in the hearing of a person of small power; so that the honestest men are influenced and warped by his rank, and the dishonest men put to their skilfullest pinches. Above all, therefore, let him be taught to ask of himself sternly, 'Is this so

indeed? Do I personally and for myself judge that it is so?' You must struggle, therefore, to get his mind to act as freely as possible, never, so far as you have power, to let him admire a picture because it has fame; if possible, let him judge of it before knowing its master. Never tell him whom a picture is by, till he has guessed; this I mean in the ordinary course of guidebook study. The study of art may be made far more amusing as well as more useful by such methods. . . .

"Secondly, a King is peculiarly exposed to delight in and encourage art as a means of Luxury or pride—to like it for its state and glitter. Therefore one of the chief results of your travels in Italy ought to be to convince the Prince of Wales that the ruin of that country, and nearly of all other countries which have ever been notably ruined, has been in great part brought about by their refinements of art applied in luxurious and proud office;—that Emperors, Kings, Doges, and republics have risen and reigned by simplicity of life; fallen and perished by luxury of life. Be assured that all the arts, followed in wantonness, and for show and state, lead straight to destruction. . . ."

And so forth, and so forth, with a "thirdly" and a "lastly," at great length. Ruskin was always on the look out for opportunities of teaching; and took equal pains with a schoolmistress submitting a drawing-copy and with a brief for a companion of the Heir-Apparent. Dr. Chambers had been selected as physician to accompany the Prince of Wales on a visit to Italy, where he was to pursue his studies for five months. He went to Rome, but owing to the outbreak of war in Italy was immediately recalled. His late Majesty was thus spared this addition to those improving designs of the Prince Consort, to which, as we now know, the young Prince offered a policy of passive resistance.[1]

VIII

In addition to a voluminous correspondence, Ruskin during these years received many visitors and friends at

[1] See the article on "The Character of King Edward VII." in the *Quarterly Review*, July 1910.

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his home on Denmark Hill. Yet it was not his home, either. He was a man of forty in 1859, and was at the height of his literary reputation. But he was still a child in the house of his parents. A sense of restraint was growing upon him, and presently became almost insupportable; but though Ruskin confessed this in letters to intimate friends, he never suffered the least trace of irritation to appear in his open relations with his parents. Mr. Frederic Harrison, with whom, as a fellow-teacher at the Working Men's College, Ruskin had become acquainted, was often at Denmark Hill in these years, and has thus described the father and the son:—

"John James Ruskin, the father, certainly seemed to me a man of rare force of character; shrewd, practical, generous, with pure ideals both in art and in life. With unbounded trust in the genius of his son, he felt deeply how much the son had yet to learn. I heard the father ask an Oxford tutor if he could not 'put John in the way of some scientific study of Political Economy.' 'John! John!' I have heard him cry out, 'what nonsense you're talking!' when John was off on one of his magnificent paradoxes, unintelligible as Pindar to the sober Scotch merchant. . . . There were moments when the father seemed the stronger in sense, breadth, and hold on realities. And when John was turned of forty, the father still seemed something of his tutor, his guide, his support. The relations between John Ruskin and his parents were among the most beautiful things that dwell in my memory. . . . This man, well past middle life, in all the renown of his principal works, who, for a score of years, had been one of the chief forces in the literature of our century, continued to show an almost child-like docility towards his father and his mother, respecting their complaints and remonstrances, and gracefully submitting to be corrected by their worldly wisdom and larger experience. The consciousness of his own public mission and the boundless love and duty that he owed to his parents could not be expressed in a way more beautiful. One could almost imagine it was in the spirit of the youthful Christ when he said to his mother, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'"[1]

[1] "Memories of John Ruskin," in *Literature*, Feb. 3, 1900.

Of the mother, and of Ruskin's charm, there is a vivid description in the letters of James Smetham. This earnest artist, much befriended by Ruskin, was a pupil at the Working Men's College; his first visit to Denmark Hill (Feb. 1855) was an event in his life:—

"I walked there through the wintry weather and got in about dusk. One or two gossiping details will interest you before I give you what I care for; and so I will tell you that he has a large house with a lodge, and a valet and a footman and coachman, and grand rooms glittering with pictures, chiefly Turner's, and that his father and mother live with him, or he with them. . . .

"His mother is a ruddy, dignified, richly-dressed old gentlewoman of seventy-five, who knows Chamouni better than Camberwell: evidently a *good* old lady, with the *Christian Treasury* tossing about on the table. She puts 'John' down and holds her own opinions, and flatly contradicts him; and he receives all her opinions with a soft reverence and gentleness that is pleasant to witness. . . .

"The old lady was quaintly kind. 'Has John showed this?' 'Has he showed you the other?' and to all her sudden injunctions he replied by waiting on me in a way to make one ashamed. . . . I wish I could reproduce a good impression of John for you, to give you the notion of his 'perfect gentleness and lowlihood.'

"He certainly bursts out with a remark, and in a contradictious way, but only because he believes it, with no air of dogmatism or conceit. He is different at home from that which he is in a lecture before a mixed audience, and there is a spiritual sweetness in the half-timid expression of his eyes, and in bowing to you, as in taking wine, with (if I heard aright) 'I drink to thee,' he had a look that has followed me, a look bordering on tearful.

"He spent some time in this way. Unhanging a Turner from the wall of a distant room, he brought it to the table and put it into my hands; then we talked; then he went up into his study to fetch down some illustrative print or drawing; in one case, a literal view which he had travelled fifty miles to make, in order to compare with the picture. And so he kept on gliding all over the house, hanging and unhanging, and stopping a few minutes to talk. There would have been, if I had not seen from the first moment that he *knew* me well, something embarrassing in the chivalrous, hovering way he

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had; as it was, I felt much otherwise, quite as free and open as you in your little study. . . . I was in a sort of soft dream all the way home; nor has the fragrance, which, like the June sunset,

'Dwells in heaven half the night,'

left my spirit yet."[1]

To none of his friends or visitors did Ruskin give any indication of the sense of "the infinite waste of time," noted in *Præterita*, "in saying the same things over and over to the people who came to see our Turners."

Such, then, as have been described in this chapter and in the five preceding it, were Ruskin's occupations—writing, lecturing, drawing, teaching—during the years of the later volumes of *Modern Painters*. His multifarious activities and the medley of his interests—reflected in the very title of the third volume, "Of Many Things"—are hit off in a letter of apology to Mrs. Carlyle:—

"Not that I have not been busy—and very busy, too. I have written, since May, good 600 pages, had them rewritten, cut up, corrected, and got fairly ready for press—and am going to press with the first of them on Gunpowder Plot Day; with a great hope of disturbing the Public Peace in various directions. Also, I have prepared about thirty drawings for engravers this year, retouched the engravings (generally the worst part of the business), and etched some on steel myself. In the course of the 600 pages I have had to make various remarks on German Metaphysics, on Poetry, Political Economy, Cookery, Music, Geology, Dress, Agriculture, Horticulture, and Navigation, all which subjects I have had to 'read up' accordingly, and this takes time. Moreover, I have had my class of workmen out sketching every week in the fields, during the summer; and have been studying Spanish proverbs with my father's partner, who came over from Spain to see the great Exhibition. I have also designed and drawn a window for the Museum at Oxford; and have every now and then had to look over a parcel of five or six new designs for fronts and backs to the said Museum. During my above mentioned studies of Horticulture I became dissatisfied with the

[1] *Letters of James Smetham*, pp. 52-55.

Linnæan, Jussieuan, and Everybody-elsian arrangement of plants, and have accordingly arranged a system of my own; and unbound my botanical book, and rebound it in brighter green, with all the pages through other, and backside foremost—so as to cut off the old paging numerals; and am now printing my new arrangement in a legible manner, on interleaved foolscap. I consider this arrangement one of my great achievements of the year. My studies of political economy have induced me to think also that nobody knows anything about that, and I am at present engaged in an investigation, on independent principles, of the Natures of Money, Rent, and Taxes, in an abstract form, which sometimes keeps me awake all night. My studies of German metaphysics have also induced me to think that the Germans don't know anything about *them;* and to engage in a serious inquiry into the meaning of Bunsen's great sentence in the beginning of the second volume of Hippolytus, about the Finite realization of the Infinity; which has given me some trouble. The course of my studies of navigation necessitated me going to Deal to look at the Deal boats; and those of Geology to rearrange all my minerals (and wash a good many, which, I am sorry to say, I found wanted it). I have also several pupils, far and near, in the art of illumination, an American young lady to direct in the study of landscape painting, and a Yorkshire young lady to direct in the purchase of Turners—and various little bye things besides.

"But I am coming to see you."

CHAPTER XXIV

RUSKIN AND ROSSETTI

"As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;
When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side."

CLOUGH ("Qua Cursum Ventus").

THE friendship between Ruskin and Rossetti is a curiously interesting episode in the personal history of English art and literature during the nineteenth century. It throws so much light on Ruskin's character as to claim a separate chapter in his biography; it makes some contribution also to the eternally vexed question, whether likeness or unlikeness be the best ground of friendship. There was enough of the "*idem velle et idem nolle*" between Ruskin and Rossetti to make a friendship possible; enough, too, of difference to add piquancy to it; but not enough readiness to give and take on equal terms to lend it permanence. Ruskin hoped to be obeyed; Rossetti was accustomed to dominate. To either of the two, a man with the genius for friendship might apply the words of Dr. Johnson in the famous conversation: "Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in a friendship with a man from whom you differ; I am only saying that *I* could."

I

Ruskin's first acquaintance with Rossetti was a result of the championship of the Pre-Raphaelites, recounted in an earlier chapter (XIV.). Domestic causes had broken the

friendship with Millais, and the rupture seems to have made Ruskin the more anxious to cultivate Rossetti, whom he regarded as the intellectual leader of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Ruskin had already done the painter a useful service by commending his work to M'Cracken, who thereupon bought the water-colour (now at Oxford) of "Dante drawing an angel in memory of Beatrice." This led to Ruskin's personal acquaintance with Rossetti, as appears from a letter of the latter to Madox Brown, dated April 14, 1854:—

"M'Cracken of course sent my drawing to Ruskin, who the other day wrote me an incredible letter about it, remaining mine respectfully (! !), and wanting to call. I of course stroked him down in my answer, and yesterday he called. His manner was more agreeable than I had always expected. . . . He seems in a mood to make my fortune."[1]

And, again, a month later, to the same correspondent: "Millais has written to me that Gambart wants me to paint something, so I imagine Ruskin is beginning to bear fruit." The date of the following letter from Ruskin is that at which his wife had left him; Rossetti's father had recently died:—

"Denmark Hill, *May* 2.—You must have been surprised and hurt at my not having written to you before—but you may perhaps already have heard, or at all events will soon hear, that I have had much upon my mind during the last week, and have been unable to attend to my daily duties—of which one of the most urgent would at another time have been that of expressing to you my sympathy on the occasion of your late loss. I should be sincerely obliged to you if you would sometimes write to me (as I shall not, I fear, be able to see you before I leave town), telling me how you are, and what you are doing and thinking of. I am truly anxious that no sorrow—still less undue distrust of yourself—may interfere with the exercise of your very noble powers, and I should deem it a great privilege if you would sometimes allow me to have fellowship in your thoughts and

[1] *D. G. Rossetti: his Family Letters, with a Memoir*, by W. M. Rossetti, vol. i. p. 180.

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sympathy with your purposes. I have ordered my bookseller to send you copies of all that I have written (though I know not of what use it can possibly be to you); and if you will insist in having so great an advantage over me as to give me a little drawing in exchange—as Glaucus gave his golden arms for Diomed's brazen ones—I shall hold it one of my most precious possessions; but *besides* this, please do a drawing for me as for Mr. Boyce, for fifteen guineas. Thus I shall have two drawings instead of one. And do them at your pleasure—of whatever subjects you like. I send the piece of opal of which I spoke, by parcels-delivery company, this afternoon. It is not a fine piece, but I think you will have pleasure in sometimes letting your eye rest upon it. I know no colours possessing its peculiar character, and a magnifying glass used to its purple extremity will show wonderful things in it. . . ."

Ruskin then went abroad, and wrote as follows to Rossetti:—

"GENEVA, *June* 4.—DEAR ~~MR.~~ ROSSETTI,—I have just scratched out the Mr. in the above address and hope you will *leave* it out in your answer to me this time. We will not go on Mr.-ing each other. . . . I know that, so far from being envious of them, you are thoroughly happy in their success; but yet you feel that there is as much in you as in them, and you have a kind of gnawing pain at not standing side by side with them. You feel as if it were not worth while now to bring out your modern subjects, as Hunt has done his first.[1] Now, as to the original suggestion of the power which there is in *modern life* if honestly treated, I firmly believe that, to whomsoever it in reality may belong in *priority of time*, it belongs to all three of you equally in *right of possession*. I think that you, Hunt, and Millais, would, every one of you, have made the discovery, without assistance or suggestion from the other. One might make it quicker or slower

[1] Rossetti's subject of modern life was "the picture called 'Found,' which work," says Mr. W. M. Rossetti, "he was now inclined to lay aside on the ground that Hunt, in his picture 'The Awakened Conscience' (begun and finished at a date later than the beginning of 'Found'), had been treating a modern subject of somewhat similar bearings." Holman Hunt, however, strongly combated the suggestion that his picture of "The Awakened Conscience" was anticipated in idea by the design of "Found": see his *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 1905, vol. ii. pp. 428 *et*.

than another, and I suppose that, actually, you were the first who did it. But it would have been impossible for men of such eyes and hearts as Millais and Hunt to walk the streets of London, or watch the things that pass each day, and not to discover also what there was in them to be shown and painted.

"Now for your subjects. I like the two first—the 'Found,' and the 'Mary Magdalene at the door of Simon's House'—exceedingly: the latter, however, much the best, partly because I have naturally a great dread of subjects altogether painful, and I can be happy in thinking of Mary Magdalene, but am merely in pain while I think of the other subject. The first also is a *dreadfully* difficult one, and I can imagine you half killing yourself in trying to get at what you want, in vain. . . .

"I sincerely trust that your best anticipations with respect to your pupil may be fulfilled."

The "pupil" was Miss Siddal, afterwards Rossetti's wife, and on his return Ruskin set about, if not making Rossetti's fortune, at any rate relieving him and her from financial anxiety. This matter is referred to in the following letter:—

(*Undated*, 1854–55.) "Dear Rossetti,—I daresay you do not quite like to answer my somewhat blunt question in my last letter; I was somewhat too brief in putting it; I was unwell, and could not write at length. My motive in asking you was simply that I did not know how best to act for you, and what to propose about sending Miss S[iddal] to Wales or Jersey, or anywhere else that might not in some way be disagreeable to you; and also because I thought that the whole thing might perhaps be much better managed in another way, and your own powers of art more healthily developed, and your own life made happier.

"I daresay our letters may now cross; but it does not matter, for, whatever may be the contents of yours, I am sure there will be one feeling apparent in it, and that will be a dislike of putting yourself under obligation to any one in carrying out any main purpose of your life. I think it well, therefore, to tell you something about myself, and what you really ought to feel about me in this matter.

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"You constantly hear a great many people saying I am very bad, and perhaps you have been yourself disposed lately to think me very good. I am neither the one nor the other. I am very self-indulgent, very proud, very obstinate, and *very* resentful; on the other side, I am very upright—nearly as just as I suppose it is possible for man to be in this world—exceedingly fond of making people happy, and devotedly reverent to all true mental or moral power. I never betrayed a trust—never wilfully did an unkind thing—and never, in little or large matters, depreciated another that I might raise myself. I believe I once had affections as warm as most people; but partly from evil chance, and partly from foolish misplacing of them, they have got tumbled down and broken to pieces. It is a very great, in the long-run the greatest, misfortune of my life that, on the whole, my relations, cousins and so forth, are persons with whom I can have no sympathy, and that circumstances have always somehow or another kept me out of the way of the people of whom I could have made friends. So that I have no friendships, and no loves.

"Now you know the best and worst of me; and you may rely upon it it is the truth. If you hear people say I am utterly hard and cold, depend upon it it is untrue. Though I have no friendships and no loves, I cannot read the epitaph of the Spartans at Thermopylæ with a steady voice to the end; and there is an old glove in one of my drawers that has lain there these eighteen years, which is worth something to me yet. If, on the other hand, you ever feel disposed to think me particularly good, you will be just as wrong as most people are on the other side. My pleasures are in seeing, thinking, reading, and making people happy (if I can, consistently with my own comfort). And I *take* these pleasures. And I suppose, if my pleasures were in smoking, betting, dicing, and giving pain, I should take *those* pleasures. It seems to me that one man is made one way, and one another—the measure of effort and self-denial can never be known, except by each conscience to itself. Mine is small enough.

"But, besides taking pleasure thus where I happen to find it, I have a theory of life which it seems to me impossible as a rational being to be altogether without—namely, that we are all sent into the world to be of such use to each other as we can, and also that

my particular use is likely to be in the things that I know something about—that is to say, in matters connected with painting.

"Thus then it stands. It seems to me that, amongst all the painters I know, you on the whole have the greatest genius, and you appear to me also to be—as far as I can make out—a very good sort of person. I see that you are unhappy, and that you can't bring out your genius as you should. It seems to me then the proper and *necessary* thing, if I can, to make you more happy, and that I should be more really useful in enabling you to paint properly and keep your room in order than in any other way. If it were necessary for me to deny myself, or to make any mighty exertion to do this, of course it might to you be a subject of gratitude, or a question if you should accept it or not. But, as I don't happen to have any other objects in life, and as I have a comfortable room and all I want in it (and more), it seems to me just as natural I should try to be of use to you as that I should offer you a cup of tea if I saw you were thirsty, and there was plenty in the teapot, and I had got all I wanted.

"I am not going to make you any offer till you tell me, if you are willing to do so, what your wishes and circumstances really are. What I meant was to ask if an agreement to paint for me regularly, up to a certain value, would put you more at your ease; but I will not enter into more particulars at present, for I hardly know, till I have settled some business with my father, what my circumstances really are. . . . Meantime I hope this letter will put you more at your ease, and that you will believe me always affectionately yours.

"One thing, by-the-bye, I hope you will not permit even for a moment to slide into your head. That anything I am doing for workmen, or for anybody, is in any wise an endeavour to *regain* position in public opinion. I *am* what I always was; I am doing what I always proposed to do, and what I have been hindered by untoward circumstances from doing hitherto; and the only temptation which is brought upon me by calumny is, not to fawn for public favour, but to give up trying to do the public any good, and enjoy myself misanthropically. I forgot to say also that I really do *covet* your drawings as much as I covet Turner's; only it is useless self-indulgence to buy Turner's, and useful self-indulgence to buy yours.

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Only I won't have them after they have been more than nine times rubbed entirely out, remember that."

The arrangement ultimately made for Rossetti's benefit was that Ruskin "undertook to buy, if he happened to like it, whatever Rossetti produced, at a range of prices, such as the latter would have asked from any other purchaser, and up to a certain maximum of expenditure on his own part. If he did not relish a work, Rossetti could offer it to any one else." "I cannot imagine," says Mr. W. M. Rossetti, "any arrangement more convenient to my brother, who thus secured a safe market for his performances, and could even rely upon not being teazed to do on the nail, work for which he received payment in whole or in part."

Towards Miss Siddal, called Lizzie or, more familiarly, "Guggum" by Rossetti and his circle, and "Ida" by Ruskin (who took the name no doubt from Tennyson's *Princess*), he showed the same considerate generosity. She had been down to spend a day with Ruskin and his parents at Denmark Hill. "All the Ruskins," wrote Rossetti to Madox Brown (April 13, 1855), "were most delighted with Guggum. John Ruskin said she was a noble, glorious creature, and his father said, by her look and manner, she might have been a Countess." Miss Siddal also was a designer, and Ruskin was greatly struck with her talent. He arranged to settle on her an annual sum of £150, "taking in exchange her various works up to that value and retaining them, or (if preferred) selling some of them, and handing over to her any extra proceeds."[1]

II

The acquaintance between Ruskin and Rossetti soon passed into a friendship—of sincere affection, it would seem, on both sides. Ruskin was ten years Rossetti's senior; the one was thirty-five, the other twenty-five, when they met. But though Ruskin was the patron and the elder of the two, they associated for several years on the terms of easy equality

[1] W. M. Rossetti's *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, vol. i. p. 184.

essential to real friendship. Letters both to Rossetti and to Miss Siddal (then in very delicate health) show how careful Ruskin had been to make light of the financial assistance. He gave, he said, only to please himself; Rossetti need feel no more sense of obligation than in accepting "a cup of tea," and Miss Siddal was to "be so good as to consider herself as a beautiful tree or a bit of a Gothic cathedral," which he was trying to preserve for merely selfish reasons :— CHAP. XXIV.

(*To* D. G. Rossetti.) "*Friday*. . . . Now about yourself and my drawings. I am not more sure of anything in this world (and I am very positive about a great many things) than that the *utmost* a man can do is that which he can do without effort. All beautiful work—singing, painting, dancing, speaking—is the *easy* result of long and painful practice. *Immediate* effort always leads to shrieking, blotching, posturing, mouthing. If you send me a picture in which you try to do your best, you may depend upon it it will be beneath your proper mark of power, and will disappoint me. If you make a careless couple of sketches, with bright and full colour in them, you are sure to do what will please me. If you try to do more, you may depend upon it I shall say 'Thank you for nothing,' very gruffly and sulkily. I don't say this in the slightest degree out of delicacy, to keep you from giving me too much time. If I really liked the laboured sketch better, I would take it at once. I tell you the plain truth—and I always said the same to Turner—'If you will do me a drawing in three days, I shall be obliged to you; but if you take three months to it, you may put it behind the fire when it is done.' And I should have said precisely the same thing to Tintoret, or any other *very* great man. . . ."

(*To* Miss Siddal.) . . . "The world is an odd world. People think nothing of taking my *time* from me every day of my life (which is to me life, money, power, all in all). They take that, without thanks, for no need, for the most trivial purposes, and would have me lose a whole day to leave a card with their footmen; and *you*, for life's sake, will not take that for which I have no use—you are too proud. You would not be too proud to let a nurse or friend give up some of her time, if you needed it, to watch by you and take care of you. What is the difference

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between their giving time and watchfulness and my giving such help as I can?

"Perhaps I have said too much of my wish to do this for Rossetti's sake. But, if you do not choose to be helped for his sake, consider also that the plain *hard fact* is that I think you have genius; that I don't think there is much genius in the world; and I want to keep what there is, in it, heaven having, I suppose, enough for all its purposes. Utterly irrespective of Rossetti's feelings or my own, I should simply do what I do, if I could, as I should try to save a beautiful tree from being cut down, or a bit of a Gothic cathedral whose strength was failing. If you would be so good as to consider yourself as a piece of wood or Gothic for a few months, I should be grateful to you. . . .

"If you would send me a little signed promise—'I will be good'—by Rossetti, I should be grateful; you can't possibly oblige me in any other way at present; you would only vex me if you sent me the best drawing that ever was seen."

(*To* Henry Acland, M.D.)—"I am going to burden you still with some other cares on the subject of Pre-Raphaelitism, of which you have already had painful thoughts enough.

"I have not asked Rossetti for permission to tell you (but I am sure I only do both him and you justice in assuming such permission) that one of the chief hindrances to his progress in art has been his sorrow at the state of health of the young girl, some of whose work I showed you. I fear this sorrow will soon be sealed—and with what effect upon him, I cannot tell; I see that his attachment to her is very deep, but how far he is prepared for the loss I know not. . . .

"She cannot go about to see things much, but I should be very glad if you would get her a lodging at Oxford for a little while and examine her—and direct her how to manage herself—then sending her to the place you think fittest. She will be able, I have no doubt, to pay the two pounds a week. I answer in haste, doubting not that when I have shown your letter to Rossetti he will be able to persuade her to give up the Jersey plan—but she cannot move for some days yet. I will let you know when to get the rooms for her. She is the daughter of a watchmaker. Rossetti first got her to sit to him for his higher female faces,

and thus found out her talent for drawing, taught her, and got attached to her, and now she is dying unless the rest and change of scene can save her. She is five-and-twenty."

Acland's prescription was a winter abroad, and Ruskin gave her the means of going.

On Rossetti the obligations conferred by Ruskin did not weigh heavily. "I had no idea," he once wrote to Madox Brown, "that you were so monumental a character as to have a banker—a dangerous discovery!"[1] The Ruskin bank was also used, and sooner or later—generally later—Rossetti gave good value in drawings for consideration received. Ruskin did not hold Rossetti too closely to the bargain, though he did indeed object on one occasion when he had offered funds for a sketching-tour in Wales and Rossetti assumed that the offer would equally hold for a trip to Paris. The arrangement with Ruskin relieved Rossetti of pecuniary anxieties, but did not enslave his art. He accepted the terms the more gladly, because gratitude was accompanied both by respect for Ruskin's genius and by a real liking for the man. "He is the best friend I ever had," he wrote in one of his *Family Letters*[2] (1855); and similarly to William Allingham in the same year: "I have no more valued friend than he, and shall have much to say of him."[3] "For Ruskin as a man and as a man of letters Rossetti had," says Mr. Hall Caine, "a profound admiration. He thought the prose of much of *Modern Painters* among the finest in the language, and he used to say that Ruskin's best talking in private life was often as vivid and impassioned."[4] For one thing, Ruskin talked Rossetti into their famous co-operation at the Working Men's College. "Ruskin," wrote Rossetti to Allingham (November 1854), "has most liberally undertaken a drawing-class, which he attends every Thursday evening, and he and I had a long confab about plans for teaching. He is most enthusiastic

[1] *Ruskin, Rossetti, and Pre-Raphaelitism*, p. 102.

[2] Vol. ii. p. 137.

[3] *Letters of D. G. Rossetti to W. Allingham*, p. 139.

[4] "Some Personal Memories," in the *Daily News*, Feb. 3, 1900. See also Mr. Hall Caine's *My Story*, p. 120.

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about it, and has so infected me that I think of offering an evening weekly for the same purpose."[1] At the College, then, as often at Denmark Hill or in Rossetti's studio, he and Ruskin met—painting together, taking counsel on art and poetry, discussing books and men and policies. The letters of each of the men draw an equally pleasant picture of their friendship. Ruskin assumed the position of critic and mentor — suggesting subjects, pointing out defects, deploring the painter's incessant retouchings. Rossetti, on his side, accepted all this for a while in good part, especially as he took his own way, nevertheless; and Ruskin, here as always in private intercourse, was as ready to learn as to teach. He begs Rossetti's assistance in selection of colours; he asks to be allowed to come and see him paint. Mr. A. P. Elmslie, who was a student at the Working Men's College in 1856, has given an anecdote which illustrates the friendly relations of the two art-teachers there. Rossetti walked round Ruskin's class-room one evening, when the latter was absent. "How's this?" he said; "nothing but blue studies—can't any of you see any colour but blue?" "It was by Mr. Ruskin's directions," one of the students answered. "Well, where do you get all this Prussian blue from?" asked Rossetti; and then, opening a cupboard, "Well, I declare, here's a packet with several dozen cakes of this fearful colour. Oh, I can't allow it; Mr. Ruskin will spoil everybody's eye for colour—I shall confiscate the whole lot; I must do it, in the interests of his and my pupils. You must tell him that I've taken them all away." When a few evenings later Ruskin was told what had happened, he "burst into one of those boisterous laughs in which he indulged whenever anything very much amused him."[2] Ruskin's criticisms of Rossetti's methods were conveyed in much the same vein of mock-heroics. His letters of reproof and remonstrance are entertaining, and should be read with an understanding of the

[1] *Letters to W. Allingham*, p. 83.

[2] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. i. p. 192. See also Mr. Elmslie's paper, p. 44, in *The Working Men's College, 1854–1904*, edited by the Rev. J. Llewelyn Davies.

mutual banter in which the friends were indulging,[1] and of the playful affection with which Ruskin seasoned his familiar talk. Ruskin said that he must decline to take drawings "after they have been more than nine times entirely rubbed out." "You are a conceited monkey," he wrote, "thinking your pictures right when I tell you positively they are wrong. What do *you* know about the matter, I should like to know?" Ruskin appears not to have preserved Rossetti's letters to himself, but letters to other correspondents suggest the kind of way in which Rossetti paid Ruskin back. Ruskin was for diligence and concentration; and to that end proposed to throw Rossetti into prison: "we will have the cell made nice, airy, cheery, and tidy, and you'll get on with your work gloriously." That was all very well, but Ruskin himself had allowed ten years to interpose between successive volumes of *Modern Painters*, "who, I tell him," wrote Rossetti, "will be old masters before the work is ended."[2] Their views on many subjects differed, and Rossetti, we may be sure, never feigned acquiescence. Sometimes he was frankly bored; as with the first chapter of *Unto this Last*, when it appeared in the *Cornhill*: "who *could* read it," he wrote to Allingham, "or anything about such bosh?" "Ruskin I saw the other day," he says again, "and pitched into, he talked such awful rubbish; but he is a dear old chap, too, and as soon as he was gone I wrote my sorrows to him."[3]

To Rossetti the poet as to Rossetti the painter, the friendship was stimulating and helpful. Rossetti had shown Ruskin his translations from the Italian. Ruskin greatly admired them and gave the money-guarantee which seems to have been required to secure their publication.[4] In 1856 Rossetti had published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* his "Burden of Nineveh." Ruskin had no inkling of the authorship, and wrote to Rossetti "wild to know the author"

[1] Mr. A. C. Benson, in his monograph on *Rossetti*, p. 32, seems to me somewhat to miss this point.

[2] *D. G. Rossetti: Family Letters, with a Memoir*, vol. ii. p. 139.

[3] *Letters to W. Allingham*, pp. 228, 269.

[4] See Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co.'s letter in *Rossetti Papers*, p. 437.

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of so "glorious" a poem. The sequel is told in a letter to Allingham. "By-the-bye, it was Ruskin made me alter that line in *The Blessed Damozel*. I had never meant to show him any of my versifyings, but he wrote to me one day asking if I knew the author of *Nineveh* and could introduce him—being really ignorant, as I found—so after that the flesh was weak. Indeed, I do not know that it will not end in a volume of mine, one of these days."[1] It appears that Rossetti showed Ruskin all his poems, then written, and asked him to submit one or other of them to Thackeray for the *Cornhill*:—

"Dear Rossetti,—I have read *Jenny*, and nearly all the other poems, with great care and with great admiration. In many of the highest qualities they are entirely great. But I should be sorry if you laid them before the public entirely in their present state. I do not think *Jenny* would be understood but by few, and even of those few the majority would be offended by the mode of treatment. The character of the speaker himself is too doubtful. He seems, even to me, anomalous. He reasons and feels entirely like a wise and just man—yet is occasionally drunk and brutal: no affection for the girl shows itself—his throwing the money into her hair is disorderly—he is altogether a disorderly person. The right feeling is unnatural in him, and does not therefore truly touch us. I don't mean that an entirely right-minded person never keeps a mistress: but, if he does, he either loves her—or, not loving her, would blame himself, and be horror-struck for himself no less than for her, in such a moralizing fit. My chief reason for not sending it to Thackeray is this discordance and too great boldness for common readers. But also in many of its verses it is unmelodious and incomplete. 'Fail' does not rhyme to 'Belle,' nor 'Jenny' to 'guinea.' You can write perfect verses if you choose, and should never write imperfect ones. None of these objections apply to the *Nocturn*. If you will allow me to copy and send that instead of the *Jenny*, I will do it instantly. Many pieces in it are magnificent,—and there is hardly one harsh line. . . .

[1] *Rossetti Papers*, p. 194.

"Or I will take *The Portrait*, if you like it better. Only you must retouch the two first stanzas. The 'there is not any difference' won't do." CHAP. XXIV.

With regard to these criticisms, Mr. W. M. Rossetti remarks that Ruskin "had misapprehended the relation which the poem intends to represent." His objection to rhyming "Jenny" to "guinea" was (properly, as many may think) rejected; that to "fail" and "Belle" was accepted; so were Ruskin's criticisms of *The Portrait:* the words to which he objected did not appear in the poem, as published, and the whole of it was revised. It was Rossetti who brought Ruskin to a proper appreciation of Browning. "On reading *Men and Women*, and with it some of the other works which he didn't know before, Ruskin declared them rebelliously," wrote Rossetti, "to be a mass of conundrums, and compelled me to sit down before him and lay siege for one whole night; the result of which was that he sent me next morning a bulky letter to be forwarded to B., in which I trust he told him he was the greatest man since Shakespeare!" [1] He did not quite do that, but he told Browning, as we have heard, that Mrs. Browning had written "the greatest poem in the English language." Rossetti was hardly less rapturous than his friend over *Aurora Leigh*. "An astounding work," he wrote of it; "I know that St. Francis and Poverty do not wed in these days in St. James' Church, with rows of portrait figures on either side, and the corners neatly finished with angels. I know that if a blind man were to enter the room this evening and talk to me for some hours, I should, with the best intentions, be in danger of twigging his blindness before the right moment came . . .; yet with all this knowledge I have felt something like a bug ever since reading *Aurora Leigh*. Oh, the wonder of it!" Of the poems of Rossetti's sister, Christina, Ruskin was severely critical, when they were first submitted to him in manuscript:—

(*To* D. G. Rossetti.) "*Jan.* 24, 1861.—I sate up till late last night reading poems. They are full of beauty and power. But no

[1] *Letters of Rossetti to W. Allingham*, p. 163. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

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publisher—I am deeply grieved to know this—would take them, so full are they of quaintnesses and offences. Irregular measure (introduced to my great regret, in its chief wilfulness, by Coleridge) is the calamity of modern poetry. The *Iliad*, the *Divina Commedia*, the *Æneid*, the whole of Spenser, Milton, Keats, are written without taking a single license or violating the common ear for metre; your sister should exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like. Then if she puts in her observation and passion all will become precious. But she must have the Form first. *All* love to you and reverent love to Ida."

Rossetti sent on this letter to his brother "with very great regret—most senseless, I think. I have told him something of the sort in my answer."[1] When the poems were published, however—whether with or without revision, I cannot tell—Ruskin pronounced them "very, very beautiful."[2]

III

Thus, then, we may picture the two friends together—sometimes agreeing, sometimes agreeing to differ. Ruskin, who, though not prim, was not Bohemian, found a good deal to put up with, and chide, in the irresponsible ways of Rossetti and his fiancée. He loved them as they were, but wished they could be better, and do as he bade them. "If you would do what I *want*," he wrote, "it would be much easier"; they were "absurd creatures," both of them; and as for Rossetti's rooms, the "litter" of them was disreputable. Yet, curiously enough, after the death of Rossetti's wife, when he set up house in Cheyne Walk in a partnership which already was to include Swinburne and George Meredith, Ruskin proposed himself as another tenant. Perhaps he did not mean the offer very seriously: at any rate nothing came of the proposal—which was fortunate, we may be sure, for all parties. Meredith has given a characteristic picture of the domestic interior. He drove over to Chelsea to inspect the apartments, which he had irresponsibly agreed to occupy.

[1] *D. G. Rossetti: His Family Letters, with a Memoir*, vol. ii. p. 165.

[2] From a letter of 1862 to Mrs. John Simon.

"It was past noon. Rossetti had not yet risen, though it was an exquisite day. On the breakfast table on a huge dish rested five thick slabs of bacon, upon which five rigid eggs had slowly bled to death. Presently Rossetti appeared in his dressing-gown with slippers down at heel, and devoured the repast like an ogre." This decided Mr. Meredith. He sent in a quarter's rent in advance, and remained in his own lodgings. Ruskin, who was a delicate liver, would have done the same, except that he might have tried to reform the Bohemian master of the house. Rossetti, moreover, had a catholic taste in live stock. Now, Ruskin was also fond of animals; of cats, one may suppose, because they are domestic, of dogs because they are obedient, of sheep because they are gentle. There is a quaint entry in one of his later diaries noting his pleasure in giving orders that a sheep was to be allowed a free run over the Brantwood grounds. But a pet sheep is one thing. Rossetti's animal friends at Chelsea included owls, rabbits, dormice, hedgehogs, a woodchuck, a marmot, a kangaroo, wallabies, a deer, armadillos, a raccoon, a raven, a parrot, chameleons, lizards, salamanders, a laughing jackass, a zebu, a succession of wombats, and at one time, I believe, a bull. Ruskin, who was an occasional visitor, must have been devoutly thankful that he had not exchanged the peaceful amenities of Denmark Hill for the ménage and menagerie of his friend.

Rossetti had married Miss Siddal in May 1860, and Ruskin presently sent his congratulations:—

"Denmark Hill, *Sept.* 4.—This is the first letter I have written since my return. I specially wished to congratulate you and Ida by word of mouth rather than by letter; but I could not get your address at Chatham Place yesterday. Please let me come and see you as soon as you can, and believe in my sincere affection and most earnest good wishes for you both.—Ever affectionately yours,

"J. Ruskin.

"I am trying to get into a methodical way of writing letters; but when I had written this, it looked so very methodical that I must put on a disorderly postscript. I looked over all the book of sketches at Chatham Place yesterday. I think Ida should be very happy to

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see how much more beautifully, perfectly, and tenderly you draw when you are drawing *her* than when you draw anybody else. She cures you of all your worst faults when you only look at her."

A little rift within the lute appears in a letter which is undated but appears to belong to 1860:—

"Dear Rossetti,—Thank you for your kind letter. I quite understand your ways and way of talking. . . .

"But what I *do* feel *generally* about you is that without intending it you are in little things habitually selfish—thinking only of what you like to do, or don't like: not of what would be kind. Where your affections are strongly touched I suppose this would not be so—but it is not *possible* you should care much for me, seeing me so seldom. I wish Lizzie and you liked me enough to—say—put on a dressing-gown and run in for a minute rather than not see me; or paint on a picture in an unsightly state, rather than not amuse me when I was ill. But you can't *make* yourselves like me, and you would only like me less if you tried. As long as I live in the way I do here, you can't of course know me rightly.

"I am relieved this morning from the main trouble I was in yesterday; and am very affectionately yours, J. Ruskin.

"Love to Lizzie.

"I am afraid this note reads sulky—it is not that: I am generally depressed. Perhaps you both like me better than I suppose you do. I mean only, I did not misinterpret or take ill anything *yesterday*; but I have no power in general of believing much in people's caring for me. I've a little more faith in Lizzie than in you—because, though she don't see me, her bride's kiss was so full and queenly-kind: but I fancy I gall *you* by my want of sympathy in many things, and so lose hold of you."

In 1862 came Mrs. Rossetti's tragic death, and Ruskin trusted "that henceforward I may be more with you, as I am able now better to feel your great powers of mind, and am myself more in need of the kindness with which they are joined." But it was not to be so. For one thing, Rossetti, in the period of his life which followed the death of his wife,

quarrelled with most of his old friends. Besides, Ruskin was didactic and Rossetti impatient. Rossetti's personality fascinated most men who came under his spell; he was accustomed to speak, and to have his words accepted, without question. It was from Ruskin alone among his friends that he heard unfavourable criticism. Moreover, Rossetti, whose suspiciousness of his friends was soon to become a form of mania, was aggrieved by reports which reached him, and which he did not stop to verify, that drawings by himself and his wife were being sold by Ruskin. On his side, Ruskin was out of sympathy with the new, and more voluptuous, development of Rossetti's art, and loudly intolerant of his technical faults. Rossetti renewed his complaints about Ruskin's disposal of his drawings; Ruskin retorted with pungent remarks on Rossetti's associates. Rossetti, it is clear, while maintaining his own opinions, still wrote kindly, and even affectionately. But the bond of sympathy was broken:— CHAP. XXIV.

(*To* D. G. Rossetti.)—"I am very grateful to you for this letter, and for the feelings it expresses towards me. I was not angry, and there was nothing in your note that needed your asking my pardon. You meant them—the first and second—just as rightly as this pretty third, and yet they conclusively showed me that we could not at present, nor for some time yet, be companions any more, though true friends, I hope, as ever.

"I am grateful for your love—but yet I do not want love. I have had boundless love from many people during my life. And in more than one case that love has been my greatest calamity—I have boundlessly *suffered* from it. But the thing, in any helpful degree, I have never been able to get, except from two women of whom I never see the only one I care for, and from Edward Jones, is 'understanding.' I am nearly sick of being loved—as of being hated—for my lovers understand me as little as my haters. I had rather, in fact, be disliked by a man who somewhat understood me than much loved by a man who understood nothing of me.

"Now I am at present out of health and irritable, and entirely resolved to make myself as comfortable as I can, and therefore to associate only with people who *in some degree* think of me as I think

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of myself. I *may* be wrong in saying I am this or that, but at present I can only live or speak with people who agree with me that I *am* this or that. And there are some things which I know I know or can do, just as well as a man knows he can ride or swim, or knows the facts of such and such a science. Now there are many things in which I always have acknowledged, and shall acknowledge, your superiority to me. I know it, as well as I know that St. Paul's is higher than I am. There are other things in which I just as simply know that *I* am superior to you. I don't mean in writing. You write, as you paint, better than I. I could never have written a stanza like you. Now in old times I did not care two straws whether you knew or acknowledged in what I was superior to you, or not. But now (being, as I say, irritable and ill) I do care, and I will associate with no man who does not more or less accept my own estimate of myself. For instance, Brett told me, a year ago, that a statement of mine respecting a scientific matter (which I knew *à fond* before he was born) was 'bosh.' I told him in return he was a fool; he left the house, and I will not see him again 'until he is wiser.' Now you in the same manner tell me 'the faults in your drawings are not greater than those I put up with in what is about me,' and that one of my assistants is a 'mistakenly transplanted carpenter.' And I answer—not that you are a fool, because no man is that who can design as you can—but simply that you know nothing of me, nor of my knowledge, nor of my thoughts, nor of the sort of grasp of things I have in directions in which you are utterly powerless; and that I do not choose any more to talk to you until you can recognize my superiorities as *I* can yours.

"And this recognition, observe, is not a matter of will or courtesy. You simply do not see certain characters in me, and cannot see them: still less could you (or should I ask you to) pretend to see them. A day may come when you will be able. Then, without apology, without restraint—merely as *being* different from what you are now—come back to me, and we will be as we used to be. It is not this affair of the drawings—not this sentence—but the ways and thoughts I have seen in you ever since I knew you, coupled with this change of health in myself, which render this necessary—complicated also by a change in your own methods of work with which I have no sympathy, and which renders it

impossible for me to give you the kind of praise which would give you pleasure. There are some things in which I know your present work to be wrong: others in which I strongly *feel* it so. I cannot conquer the feeling, though I do not allege that as a proof of the wrongness. The points of knowledge I could not establish to you, any more than I could teach you mineralogy or botany, without some hard work on your part, in directions in which it is little likely you will ever give it. It is of course useless for me, under such circumstances, to talk to you. . . ."

A letter written explicitly in irritation; yet even so, only to be understood as the final awakening to a gradual estrangement of soul from soul. Others than Ruskin found Rossetti impossible as a friend; but others than Rossetti might well have found Ruskin's terms exacting. "He has never rubbed his mind against others," said Jowett of him, in later years. This letter to Rossetti reveals a temper of aloofness and of pride which was to grow in Ruskin. For a while the friendship between the two men was kept in being. "Ruskin called on Gabriel on Wednesday," says Mr. W. M. Rossetti in his diary for December 7, 1866, "and all went off most cordially, Ruskin expressing great admiration of the 'Beatrice in a Death-trance.'"[1] This was the "Beata Beatrix" bought, perhaps at Ruskin's suggestion, by his friend Mrs. Cowper-Temple, and now in the National Gallery by her bequest. In 1868 Ruskin sought, we are told, to enlist Rossetti's co-operation "in efforts for social amelioration on a systematic scale";[2] the actual suggestion was probably that Rossetti should join the Committee on the Unemployed, in which Ruskin was at that time deeply interested. This, however, was not at all in Rossetti's line, and the two friends did not, it is believed, meet again. They continued, however, occasionally to correspond. Ruskin showed "kind and unassuming generosity" to an Italian friend of Rossetti,[3] and "there is a letter from Ruskin to Rossetti, as late as August 1870, perfectly amicable, and including a reference to the *Poems*

[1] *Rossetti Papers*, p. 199.
[2] *Memoir of D. G. Rossetti*, vol. i. p. 262.
[3] *Rossetti Papers*, p. 361.

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then published."[1] The break in their personal intercourse in no way affected Ruskin's appreciation of his friend's genius. In *The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism*, written in 1878, he mentioned many of Rossetti's pictures as "of quite imperishable power and value, as also many of the poems to which he gave up part of his painter's strength." Ruskin's references to his "much loved friend," Gabriel Rossetti, in *The Art of England* (1883) show how warmly he cherished the memory of his friend; and Mr. Hall Caine, who saw much of Rossetti in his later years, tells me that he never spoke of Ruskin but with gratitude and loyalty. In *Præterita*, Ruskin had intended to speak of Rossetti more fully, but a short characterisation alone was written. "He was really," says Ruskin, "not an Englishman, but a great Italian tormented in the Inferno of England; doing the best he could; but the 'could' shortened by the strength of his animal passions, without any trained control, or guiding faith." What he thus spoke of the dead, he had said in effect to his friend. "I don't say you do wrong, because you don't seem to know what *is* wrong, but just to do whatever you like as far as possible—as puppies and tomtits do."

[1] *Memoir*, vol. i. p. 263.

CHAPTER XXV

THE END OF *MODERN PAINTERS*

(1856–1860)

> "And now, in writing beneath the cloudless peace of the snows of Chamouni, what must be the really final words of the book which their beauty inspired and their strength guided, I am able, with yet happier and calmer heart than ever heretofore, to enforce its simplest assurance of Faith, that the knowledge of what is beautiful leads on, and is the first step, to the knowledge of the things which are lovely and of good report; and that the laws, the life, and the joy of beauty in the material world of God, are as eternal and sacred parts of His creation as, in the world of spirits, virtue; and in the world of angels, praise."—*Epilogue* to *Modern Painters*, 1888.

The manifold activities which have been described in preceding chapters were pursued in the busy world of men. The completion of *Modern Painters* required a different kind of experience—

> "The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

It was in the Fairies' Hollow at Chamouni or among the shade of the Unterwalden pine; in the solitude of the Scottish moors; in the sacred places of Swiss history; or from his library windows, open to the stars and clouds, that Ruskin carried on the studies of natural beauty, and conceived the imaginative fancies and piercing thoughts, which he was afterwards to clothe with literary art. Foreign travel, too, always stimulated his powers. "It is good for me," he wrote to his father from Turin (July 19, 1858), "to be on the Continent, as I get a sensation every now and then—and knowledge always: in England I can enjoy myself in a quiet way as I can in the garden at home, but

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I get no strong feeling of any kind." This chapter, therefore, will be mainly concerned with his summer tours in 1856, 1857, 1858, and 1859. It is characteristic of Ruskin's strenuous life that the crowning volume of his principal work should be the fruit of holiday tasks and holiday thoughts.

I

(1856)

We left Ruskin in an earlier chapter (XIX.. p. 373) as he was about to start in May 1856 for a tour with his parents in Switzerland. He had been through a hard spell of winter's work in finishing the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters;* he must have needed the holiday, and he was in the mood to enjoy it. The diary shows him in full activity and enthusiasm. At Calais—now how much changed from then!—he finds "for once nothing changed anywhere: the young leaves lovely, and the old spire seen through them." At Senlis, the view from the cathedral was "quite magnificent, and the clear, crystalline French sunlight like Paradise." The travellers went by their old road to Bâle, and spent seven or eight weeks in the towns or on the lakes of Northern Switzerland, in the Bernese Oberland, and at Fribourg. One of the main objects which Ruskin proposed to himself on this tour was a continuation of the intended series of illustrations of Swiss towns (p. 332). The illustrations were to accompany a book on Swiss history, and the diary contains various memoranda of dates and events; to which, in after years, Ruskin added the comment, "Things begun, unfinished: No. 1—Swiss Battles." The list was destined to become a long one; he was for ever planning more schemes than even his prodigious industry and unaffrighted plunges into new subjects could complete. "My father," he writes of this tour, "begins to tire of the proposed work on Swiss towns, and to inquire whether the rest of *Modern Painters* will ever be done." Perhaps he had tired of the historical project a little himself; at any rate, the snows of Chamouni began to call, and in

the middle of July the party moved to Vevay, Geneva, St. Martin, and Chamouni. Arrived among the aiguilles, Ruskin was soon deep in his geological studies: "at work with pickaxe and spade before breakfast," we read more than once in the diary, "for an hour and a half." He paid another flying visit to Chamouni in 1858, and was there again for a few days in 1859; but this, in 1856, was the longest of the visits which immediately preceded the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*. He visited all his favourite haunts—the Fairies' Hollow at Châtelard, the Breven, and the rest; he was very busy with his sketch-book, and noted, as well as drew, the movements of the clouds among the mountains. On this occasion he met an old friend. "At Chamouni," wrote Sir Henry Layard,[1] "I fell in with Ruskin, and enjoyed a walk with him on the glaciers; he is always eloquent and agreeable."

It was on this occasion also, as already related, that Ruskin made the friendship of Charles Eliot Norton. "I have not a memory of these days," said Norton in later years, "in which I recall him except as one of the pleasantest, gentlest, kindest, and most interesting of men."[2] "He seemed to me," adds Norton, "cheerful rather than happy. The deepest currents of his life ran out of sight." There was, for one thing, no longer that complete inward unity which is necessary to happiness; Ruskin was beginning to outgrow the simple and assured religious faith of his childhood and early manhood. Then, again, more and more, as the years went by, he was to be oppressed by the contrast between the beauty of the world of nature and the hardness of the human lot, the blindness, the indifference, or the folly of mankind towards the things which pertain to their peace. The responsibilities of human life, the shortness of the allotted span, as measured by the infinity of things to be learnt and to be done, weighed heavily upon a man whose curiosity was as unbounded as his versatility. There is a Sunday meditation in his diary of this period (Geneva, September 7, 1856) which reveals some of the inner currents

[1] *Autobiography*, vol. ii. p. 209.

[2] *Letters of Ruskin to Norton*, vol. i. p. 5.

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of Ruskin's life. He makes a numerical "calculation of the number of days which under perfect term of human life I might have to live." He works the sum out to 11,795, and for some years onward the days in his diary are noted by the diminishing numbers.[1] Throughout this tour of 1856 he was constantly at work, not only drawing, observing, geologising, but also, in accordance with his invariable custom, reading; and by reading Ruskin meant reading, marking, learning. The diary of this summer shows him busy, among many things, with notes on the morality of *Redgauntlet*, and with an analysis and collation of all the texts in the Bible relating to Conduct and Faith. In the evenings he read aloud to his mother, selecting on this occasion several of George Sand's stories; on these also he made critical notes.

II

(1857)

Ruskin and his parents returned by Paris, where he again spent several days in studying the pictures at the Louvre. He was home early in October, and plunged at once into some of that various work which is described in earlier chapters. Turner's pictures had to be described, and the drawings arranged. His classes at the Working Men's College simultaneously claimed his attention; and, as an offshoot from this work, he wrote during the winter of 1856–57 *The Elements of Drawing*. At the beginning of the new year he was further engaged in lecturing. The spring and summer of 1857 brought fresh tasks. There were his *Academy Notes* to be written; and in July the Manchester lectures on *The Political Economy of Art* were delivered.

After a visit to Sir Walter and Lady Trevelyan at Wallington, he was taken off by his parents to the Highlands for a holiday (July to October). Of this tour no diary has been found. The short sketch which Ruskin

[1] With some interruptions from ill-health, the "perfect term of human life" was allotted to Ruskin; he was seventy in 1889, which was in fact the end of his working years.

gives of it in his autobiography suggests that he was not too well pleased at being diverted from his favourite haunts among the Alps. But the journey left vivid impressions upon his mind, and was fruitful, both in minute studies of nature and in general observations. The opening pages of *The Two Paths* are eloquent with Ruskin's impressions of a country "stern and wild," which is devoid of any "valuable monuments of art," while yet it is the nurse of noble heroism, and is able to "hallow the passions and confirm the principles" of its children "by direct association with the charm, or power, of nature." Ruskin worked hard during the autumn at drawing. A single drawing at Blair Athol took him, he says, "a week at six hours a day."

He hurried back from Scotland on receiving official intimation that the Trustees of the National Gallery had decided to entrust the arrangement of the Turner drawings to him. This, as we have seen, was his main work during the ensuing months, and it was very heavy. But he also revised for publication the lectures on *The Political Economy of Art*, and wrote the Addenda to them. Work for *Modern Painters*, though it was put on one side, did not pass from his mind, and during this autumn of 1857 he made many studies of "Cloud Beauty." He once said that he "bottled skies" as carefully as his father bottled sherries; here, from his diary, are some samples:—

"*November* 1. 11,442.—A vermilion morning at last, all waves of soft scarlet, sharp at edge, and graduated to purple and grey scud moving slowly beneath it from the south-west, heaps of grey cumuli—between the scud and cirrus—at horizon [sketch]. It issued in an exquisite day—a little more cold and turn to east in wind; but clear and soft. All purple and blue in distance, and misty sunshine near on the trees, and green fields. Very green they are—the fields, that is; and the trees hardly yet touched on the Norwood western hillside with autumn colour. Note the exquisite effect of the golden leaves scattered on the blue sky, and the horse-chestnut, thin and small, dark against them in stars [sketch]."

"*November* 3. 11,440.—Dawn purple, flushed, delicate. Bank of grey cloud, heavy at six [sketch]. Then the lighted purple cloud

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showing through it, open sky of dull yellow above—all grey, and darker scud going across it obliquely, from the south-west—moving fast, yet never stirring from its place, at last melting away. It expands into a sky of brassy flaked light on grey—passes away into grey morning."

It was on collections of memoranda such as these, made both in pen and pencil during a long series of years, that the chapters on the Clouds in the fifth volume were based. Ruskin's study windows commanded a wide expanse of open country; and in the large garden behind his house at Denmark Hill he had materials ready to hand for his studies in trees and leaves and flowers. The autumn flowers he did not love as he did the autumn skies. "Garden spoiled," he notes in his diary, "by vile chrysanthemums." The poetry of these "autumn fairies," which Maeterlinck has expressed so prettily, seldom appealed to Ruskin. He loved best the most natural flowers, and "the pensiveness which falls upon us as the leaves drift by in their fading," filled him often with sadness. In later years he disliked the season of autumn, and always longed for the return of spring. Mrs. Severn would sometimes call his attention to the beauty of the autumn woods, but he had made up his mind against them; though, to please her, he would admire them "just this time."

III

(1858)

Ruskin's work at the National Gallery, which moreover was not allowed to interrupt his teaching at the Working Men's College, did not exhaust his energies during the winter of 1857–58. In January, February, and April he gave lectures, and in May there were again *Academy Notes* to be written. By the time that these were off his hands, and that he had finished the arrangement of the Turner drawings, he was thoroughly tired out, and he set forth in May for a long holiday in Switzerland and Italy. On this occasion his parents did not accompany him, and the daily

letter to his father gives us full particulars of his movements and impressions. "I mean," he said to his father (Calais, May 13, 1858), "to write my diary as much as I can by letter; it will amuse mamma and you, and be just as useful to me as if in a book." The tour lasted four months; and became a long journey in more than one sense. He was to be led into trains of thought and study which carried him far. He went leisurely through France, and thence by Bâle to Rheinfelden, where he stayed a week. One of the objects of his tour was to identify the scene of some of Turner's sketches in the National Gallery:—

"RHEINFELDEN, *May* 20.—If you want to see where I am, just call at the National Gallery as soon as you go back to town, and ask Wornum to let you look at the frames Nos. 86, 87, 88, 89, 90; they are all very like, except only that the town, which Mr. Turner has made about the size of Strasburg, consists of one street and a few lanes, and what he had drawn as mountains are only the wooded Jura, but pretty in shape. . . . But the most beautiful thing of all is the old moat round the whole town, now filled with the sweetest possible gardens, chiefly in flower with white narcissus and deep red tulips,—not striped, but one mass of red, bloomed with blue like a plum, and others purple; the grey walls above covered with ivy, and with all their towers yet unfallen: you will see them in Turner's sketches."

The old moat is the subject of the drawing which was engraved for Plate 84 in *Modern Painters* and entitled "Peace." Another of his drawings of Rheinfelden is engraved at the same place (Plate 83), being one of those which he made "to show the exact modifications made by Turner as he composed his subjects."

From Rheinfelden Ruskin went by Stein (looking across the Rhine to the old town of Sakingen) and Lauffenbourg to Brugg. Thence he went to see and sketch the Castle of Hapsburg. The next halting-place was Bremgarten, where Madame de Genlis had in 1793 taken refuge with her pupil, Mademoiselle d'Orleans, and where he was interested in finding some memorials of her. Next he went to Zug, a town still little known to the tourist—the Swiss Nuremberg, some call it—combining the interest of many old buildings

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with a sylvan lake and pastoral scenery. The art of the Swiss did not impress Ruskin, but the quiet landscape lapped him round in contented peace:—

"*Sunday* [*May* 30].—I was thinking, as I walked here yesterday among the villages, why it was that I am so especially fond of Switzerland, as distinguished from other countries; and I find the reason to be that I am so peculiarly sociable (provided only that people don't talk to me). In all other countries the masses of the people are collected in cities, and one passes through large extents of land without seeing more than a few cottages of agricultural labourers; but in Switzerland the mass of the people is dispersed through the whole country: their power and life are mainly there; and one passes, not through field after field of merely cultivated land, but through estate after estate of various families, each having its family mansion, its garden, meadow and corn land, and the cheerfulness and bustle of all kinds of business, together with the various character of old and young, of master and servant, of labour and, in a certain simple way, luxury. There is also a kind of society in the mere redundance of animal life which is very pleasing to me. In going over the Northumberland moors near Lady Trevelyan's, if you stop and listen, you will hear nothing but the wind whistling—a rattling brook perhaps among some stones, now and then the cry of a curlew, now and then the bleat of a lamb: all plaintive and melancholy. Yesterday, as I told you, the evening was quite windless, and when I stopped and listened there were all the following sounds going on at once:—

"1. Grasshoppers. Very merry indeed.

"2. Grilles (a brown insect, half grasshopper, half fly: more shrill and clear in voice than the grasshopper—like a quantity of little Jews' harps among the grass). Very merry also.

"3. Birds in general, twittering softly, but in great numbers.

"4. Bees. Very loud everywhere.

"5. Runlets of water in the grass and from wooden pipes—a peculiarly Swiss sound, quite different from the noise of stony streams.

"6. Doves.

"7. Cuckoos.

"8. Church bells.

"9. Peasant cracking his whip, some way off in a bye-road (objectionable, except that it seemed to please *him*).

"10. Ditto singing 'Ranz des vaches' (objectionable also, but romantic).

"Now that's companionable and pleasant."

These thoughts afterwards coloured a well-known passage in one of his books:—

"So long as men live by bread, the far away valleys must laugh as they are covered with the gold of God, and the shouts of His happy multitude ring round the winepress and the well. . . . No scene is continually and untiringly loved, but one rich by joyful human labour; smooth in field; fair in garden; full in orchard; trim, sweet, and frequent in homestead; ringing with voices of vivid existence. No air is sweet that is silent; it is only sweet when full of low currents of under sound—triplets of birds, and murmur and chirp of insects, and deep-toned words of men, and wayward trebles of childhood. As the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary;—the wild flower by the wayside, as well as the tended corn; and the wild birds and creatures of the forest, as well as the tended cattle; because man doth not live by bread only, but also by the desert manna; by every wondrous word and unknowable work of God."[1]

With this impression of pastoral peace, recollections of human endurance and valour mingled in Ruskin's mind and letters, as afterwards in the pages of his fifth volume; for from Zug he drove to one of the sacred spots of Swiss history—the field of Morgarten; and then on to Brunnen, in the heart of the Tell country, where also there was the interest of identifying Turner's views. From Brunnen he moved on to Fluelen, where he met his painter-friend, Inchbold.[2] His days on the Bay of Uri were to be fruitful by-and-by. Among the most beautiful passages in the fifth volume is that which describes the lake and woods of the Vierwaldstätter-see; and in after years he took pleasure in the thought that, whatever else may have been faulty in his work, he had at least done full justice to the Unterwalden Pine.

[1] *Unto this Last*, § 82.

[2] See above, p. 401.

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From Fluelen he drove over the St. Gothard to Bellinzona. He was already familiar with the town, as the lecture on "Iron" in *The Two Paths* shows. On this occasion he had intended to make but a short halt there, but was so charmed with the place—in those days before the railway—that he stayed a month :—

"Bellinzona [*June* 14]. . . . I have never yet seen elsewhere quite such a place as this. What the climate is you may guess by the white mulberries being now ripe; they are stripping the trees, and the ground is white with fallen fruit, luscious as honey. Imagine this climate in the midst of gneiss rocks—exactly like those of the Garry at Killiecrankie, only vaster—and towering back into ridge beyond ridge of mountain, terrace, and crest; you can hardly conceive how wonderful it is to stand beside the torrents, sweeping in bright waves over these rocks, with all the look of the loveliest Highland stream, but above—instead of mountain ash and low heath—groves and overhanging shades of sweet chestnut and roofs of continuous vine, the rock ferns shooting out among the vine tendrils. I have often seen Italian scenery of this kind in limestone, but never yet in gneiss, flecked with quartz like that of the Matterhorn, and glittering with broad plates of black mica; painted oratories at every turn, and little chapels; the brooks coming down through the very vineyards over stony beds crossed by foot-bridges; the great fortresses showing their towers continually through the gaps in the leaves above; and the people—not pale and diseased as in Val d'Aosta, nor ugly as in Switzerland, but nearly all beautiful and full of quick sight and power, faces burning with intelligence and strength of sensation—useless, on account of idleness, but bright to look upon. And with all this, in an hour and a half, if I like, I can be in the climate of Cumberland, without the damp of it, for the hills rise steep on both sides of the valley to the snow-line—no glaciers, nor perpetual snow, but, for a month yet, snow in all the hollows; and, to make things complete in a not unimportant point, superb trout—none of your white lake-bred things, but stream trout—pink like roses, and fresh like cream."

These were weeks of quiet thinking and of sketching. Thus he writes from Bellinzona (June 17): "I am much stronger

than when I left home, and shall probably soon begin writing a little *M. P.* in the mornings, but I want to get a couple of months of nearly perfect rest before putting any push of shoulder to it."

From Bellinzona (after a day or two's excursion to Locarno) Ruskin drove to the head of the lake, and took the steamer for Baveno and the Isola Bella. Writing thence to his father (July 8), Ruskin mentions a political observation which made a great impression on him, for he used it more than once as an illustration in his economic writings:[1]—

"No pity nor respect can be felt for these people, who have sunk and remain sunk, merely by idleness and wantonness in the midst of all blessings and advantages: who cannot so much as bank out—or in—a mountain stream, because, as one of their priests told me the other day, every man always acts for himself: they will never act together and do anything at common expense for the common good; but every man tries to embank his own land and throw the stream upon his neighbours; and so the stream masters them all and sweeps its way down all the valley in victory. This I heard from the curate of a mountain chapel at Bellinzona, when I went every evening to draw his garden."

From Baveno Ruskin climbed the Monterone, and condemned it as the stupidest "of all stupid mountains—grass all the way, no rocks, no interest, and the dullest view of the Alps I ever yet saw in my life" (July 13). At Arona he stopped a night and made some notes on Turnerian Topography there, and thence he went by rail to Turin. There he stayed five or six weeks, enjoying the town life after his seclusion in the mountains:—

"Turin, *July* 15.—It is just two months since I arrived late at Bar-le-Duc from Paris, and was shown up the rough wooden stairs to the rougher room of a French country inn. With the exception of a single evening at the Trois Rois at Basle, my life since has been entirely rural, not to say savage—it having been my chance or need to lodge in an unbroken succession of either primitive or

[1] See *Unto this Last*, § 72 *n.*, and Library Edition, vol. xvii. p. 551.

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decidedly bad inns. I am very sorry to say that after this rustication I find much contentment in a large room looking into your favourite square, a note or two of band, a Parisian dinner, and half a pint of Moet's champagne with Monte Viso ice in it."

The diary (still in the form of letters) shows him as keenly observant as ever, noting, for instance, the contrasts between French and Italian dress, and studying "the Paul Veronese types" in the streets:—

"I have made up my mind," he writes (August 19), "that it is quite impossible for anybody to be a figure painter in the North, except in the stiff Holbein way. The myriads of beautiful things one sees in this climate—where heads are always bare, and generally necks and arms; where people live in the open air, and in walking along a street, one walks through household after household, watching all their little domestic ways of going on—are more to a real painter than all the Acadamy teaching he could get in a lifetime."

The comfort and gaiety of Turin—still, it will be remembered, the capital of the Sardinian Kingdom—made Ruskin in the mood to enjoy the pictures by Paolo Veronese which are among the principal treasures of the Gallery in that city. To the studies then commenced he always attached a turning-point in his mental development, so far as the criticism of art was concerned. He had started on the path of his critical pilgrimage spellbound by the "physical art-power of Rubens." Then, under strong reaction, he fell into the arms of the Primitives, and Angelico was the god of his artistic idolatry. He was fully conscious of the power and charm of the Venetians, but he regarded their art as "partly luxurious and sensual," and their religion as insincere. His study of Veronese at Turin, and afterwards of Titian in the German Galleries, drew him away once more from the Purist to the Naturalist ideal, and Titian and Veronese became to him standards of "worldly visible truth," no less than of perfection in art—the earlier school, "worshippers not of a worldly and visible Truth, but of a visionary one doing less perfect work." Ruskin was to undergo one other transition and no more—discovering at Assisi in 1874 "the fallacy that Religious artists were

weaker than Irreligious." The story of these "oscillations of temper and progressions of discovery" is fully told by Ruskin himself in *Fors Clavigera*.[1] It is with the last stage but one that we are now concerned—the stage which Ruskin had reached when he sat down to write the concluding chapters of *Modern Painters*, with "the enchanted voice of Venice" sounding in his ears. The new problems which began to compel his attention as he worked and wondered before Veronese's pictures at Turin are stated very clearly in a note, which I found among his papers, on an "Annunciation" by Orazio Lomi (Gentileschi):—

"Besides being well studied in arrangement, the features of both figures are finely drawn in the Roman style—the 'high' or Raphaelesque manner—and very exquisitely finished; and yet they are essentially ignoble; while, without the least effort, merely treating their figures as pieces of decoration, Titian and Veronese are always noble; and the curious point is that both of *these* are sensual painters, working apparently with no high motive, and Titian perpetually with definitely sensual aim, and yet invariably noble; while this Gentileschi is perfectly modest and pious, and yet base. And Michael Angelo goes even greater lengths, or to lower depths, than Titian; and the lower he stoops, the more his inalienable nobleness shows itself. Certainly it seems intended that strong and frank animality, rejecting all tendency to asceticism, monachism, pietism, and so on, should be connected with the strongest intellects. Dante, indeed, is severe, at least, of all nameable great men; he is the severest I know. But Homer, Shakespeare, Tintoret, Veronese, Titian, Michael Angelo, Sir Joshua, Rubens, Velasquez, Correggio, Turner, are all of them boldly Animal. Francia and Angelico, and all the purists, however beautiful, are poor weak creatures in comparison. I don't understand it; one would have thought purity gave strength, but it doesn't. A good, stout, self-commanding, magnificent Animality is the make for poets and artists, it seems to me. . . . Has God made faces beautiful and limbs strong, and created these strange, fiery, fantastic energies, and created the

[1] Letter 76 (March 1877).

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splendour of substance and the love of it; created gold, and pearls, and crystal, and the sun that makes them gorgeous; and filled human fancy with all splendid thoughts; and given to the human touch its power of placing and brightening and perfecting, only that all these things may lead His creatures away from Him? And is this mighty Paul Veronese, in whose soul there is a strength as of the snowy mountains, and within whose brain all the pomp and majesty of humanity floats in a marshalled glory, capacious and serene like clouds at sunset—this man whose finger is as fire, and whose eye is like the morning—is he a servant of the devil; and is the poor little wretch in a tidy black tie, to whom I have been listening this Sunday morning expounding Nothing with a twang—is he a servant of God? It is a great mystery. I begin to suspect we are all wrong together—Paul Veronese in letting his power waste into wantonness, and the religious people in mistaking their weakness and dulness for seriousness and piety. It is all very well for people to fast, who can't eat; and to preach, who cannot talk nor sing; and to walk barefoot, who cannot ride, and then think themselves good. Let them learn to master the world before they abuse it."

The impressions received from the pictures of Paolo Veronese at Turin were founded on intense observation. Of "The Queen of Sheba" he made the most elaborate studies:—

"Turin, *July* 23. . . . I am very comfortable here, and I may as well work through the drawing now it is gone so far. It is just about the size of the rocks of Blair Athol, and worked in the same way, and will contain about the same quantity of work—a little less, perhaps, as one necessarily uses rather a bolder touch in drawing from Veronese; but that took me a week at six hours a day, and this will take me a fortnight at two or three. It is only the negro girl with her two birds, one of gold and one of enamel, with ruby eyes, for a present to Solomon, and a bit of the white and gold train of her mistress behind her; but it begins to look very well. I am never tired of laughing at the Queen of Sheba's dog; he seems to snarl harder and stand stiffer on his little legs every day."

"Turin, *Aug.* 25.—The light and shade drawing of the head is, in a certain sense of the word, 'done'—*i.e.*, I don't want to do any more to it; but to finish it as I *could* finish, would take about three

months. I quite understand how Leonardo is said to have taken ten years to a single head. Veronese, I have no doubt, did it perfect in about two hours; but Veronese is Veronese, and I am not."

Ruskin's minute patience, as he worked day after day upon the Veronese, greatly impressed the casual visitors, one of whom has described him at work:—

"A great contrast to the Italians at Turin was Mr. Ruskin, whom we saw constantly. He was sitting all day upon a scaffold in the gallery, copying bits of the great picture by Paul Veronese. . . . One day in the gallery I asked him to give me some advice. He said, 'Watch me.' He then looked at the flounce in the dress of a maid of honour of the Queen of Sheba for five minutes, and then he painted one thread: he looked for another five minutes, and then he painted another thread. At the rate at which he was working he might hope to paint the whole dress in ten years: but it was a lesson as to examining what one drew well before drawing it."[1]

On such close examination were Ruskin's conclusions founded.

The revelation of Paolo Veronese had a religious as well as an artistic significance: the two things being indeed, in Ruskin's mind, essentially connected. The process of "unconversion," as he calls it—the abandonment of his old evangelical faith—was accomplished when he returned from a service in the Waldensian chapel to the "Queen of Sheba" in the Gallery. In the chapel "a little squeaking idiot was preaching to an audience of seventeen old women and three louts that they were the only children of God in Turin; and that all the people in Turin outside the chapel, and all the people in the world out of sight of Monte Viso, would be damned." Ruskin walked back into the condemned city, and up into the gallery where Veronese's picture glowed in full afternoon light. "The windows being open, there came in with the warm air, floating swells and falls of military music, from the courtyard before the palace, which seemed to me more devotional, in their perfect art, tune, and discipline, than anything I remembered of evangelical hymns.

[1] Augustus Hare, *The Story of my Life*, vol. ii. p. 107.

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And as the perfect colour and sound gradually asserted their power on me, they seemed finally to fasten me in the old article of Jewish faith, that things done delightfully and rightly were always done by the help and in the Spirit of God." A rational and moral being does not change his creed on the instant because he has heard a foolish sermon in a suburban chapel and seen a beautiful picture on a bright afternoon. That hour's meditation in the gallery of Turin "only concluded," said Ruskin, "the courses of thought which had been leading me to such end through many years." The pages of this biography have shown how his religious belief had been fastened from childhood upon the strictest Protestantism. When he was a boy, he had been trained by his parents to notice some vital distinction whenever he passed from a Protestant to a Catholic canton. On the present journey he had passed from pastoral cantons in Catholic Switzerland to the Protestant valleys of the Vaudois. He had made a little tour among them from his headquarters at Turin, and the reflection which he brought back with him was that "good and true pieces of God's work" had been done by stout and stern Roman Catholics among the Swiss mountains no less than by the Vaudois peasants. He was thus reaching what he elsewhere calls the true "religion of humanity"—the religion whose rule of conduct is "that human work must be done honourably and thoroughly, because we are now Men;—whether we ever expect to be angels, or ever were slugs, being practically no matter": and "that in resolving to do our work well is the only sound foundation of any religion whatsoever."[1] This is the principle which in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* colours many of Ruskin's chapters.

Some other thoughts that came to Ruskin in the Gallery at Turin, or on the Capuchin Hill and the Superga, are recorded in the lecture which he gave at Cambridge shortly after his return to England. The first note of the passage in the lecture to which I refer occurs in a letter to his father:—

"*July* 27.—I went this afternoon over the villa which perhaps

[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 76.

you may remember commands a noble view of the city, just above the bridge over the Po; it is called Vigna della Regina, and is stated by Murray 'to have been built by Cardinal Maurice, when he had ceased to be a cardinal for the purpose of marrying his niece.' This same cardinal, while yet in the Church, commissioned Albani to paint him the four pictures of the seasons which are still in the gallery, ordering the painter to give him in them *una copiosa quantita di amoretti*, and certainly Albani has supplied Cupids in the cluster. But the palace in its abandoned state on the hill is like a lesson of the passing away of all things founded on the pursuit of mere pleasure."

In the lecture he describes the panorama of Alps and plain,[1] and then the deserted garden of the Cardinal:—

"So stands this palace of pleasure; desolate as it deserves—desolate in smooth corridor and glittering chamber—desolate in pleached walk and planted bower—desolate in that worst and bitterest abandonment which leaves no light of memory. . . .

"And day by day as I walked there, the same sentence seemed whispered by every shaking leaf, and every dying echo, of garden and chamber. 'Thus end all the arts of life, only in death; and thus issue all the gifts of man, only in his dishonour, when they are pursued or possessed in the service of pleasure only.' This then is the great enigma of Art History,—you must not follow Art without pleasure, nor must you follow it for the sake of pleasure. And the solution of that enigma is simply this fact; that wherever Art has been followed *only* for the sake of luxury or delight, it has contributed, and largely contributed, to bring about the destruction of the nation practising it: but wherever Art has been used *also* to teach any truth, or supposed truth—religious, moral, or natural—there it has elevated the nation practising it, and itself with the nation."

At Turin, as always, he observed the passing effects of cloud and storm; as also during excursions to the Superga, to St. Michele (the romantic building which crowns the Monte Pirchiriano above the town of S. Ambrogio), and to Rivoli; and the observations made at the foot of the Alps

[1] I am fortunate in possessing a water-colour sketch by Ruskin of part of the panorama there described.

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or among the valleys, of the Cenis yielded many of the cloud-studies given in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*. Ruskin's attendants on this tour, like George on a former one, entered into their master's tastes. "I had a very delightful evening yesterday," he writes to his father (August 14). "I drove to Rivoli (the battle of Rivoli place), which is an old Italian town on the first gneiss rock that rises out of the plain, at the foot of the Alps. It looks up the valley of the Cenis westwards, but projects so far into the plain that it commands the whole range of the Alps on both sides as completely as the Superga does. . . . Couttet and Crawley had been disputing which was the finest view, this or the Superga, Couttet holding for this. On my giving the verdict in his favour, he was very triumphant (and came to me for judgment), and crowed over Crawley considerably; but I only heard of it Crawley's final and unanswerable statement, 'Chack personn conny song goo.'" It was Crawley who, in reporting his master's ill-health to Burne-Jones,[1] said, "how much he wished he could see him 'take pleasure in a Halp again.'"

Ruskin's work at Turin was at last concluded, and he went north to Susa, walking thence over the Cenis in order to geologise. From St. Jean de Maurienne he took the railway to Aix, finding it, strange to say, "very enjoyable, though dusty; where the scenery is so huge, the railroad merely makes a splendid moving panorama of it, not a whizzing dream."[2] After a few days at Annecy, Ruskin drove to Bonneville, and so to St. Gervais, where he met Mr. and Mrs. Simon. Here Ruskin was once more "among his own mountains." "I am very glad to find," he writes from Annecy (September 3), "that my feeling for my dear old Genevoise country is not dulled: I never thought it more beautiful." He went over to Chamouni to see the Couttets, and then returned by Geneva to Paris (where he saw the Brownings), and so home. He had much work before him—

[1] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, vol. ii. p. 85.

[2] Letter to his father from Annecy, September 3. One may compare Stevenson's plea for the charm of landscape as seen from the railway train (see his "Ordered South" in *Virginibus Puerisque*).

much food, too, for thought received during his travels to be digested. The quiet country lanes which then surrounded his home were grateful to him. Such hours are noted in the diary:—

"*Monday, October* 18*th*.—The loveliest two days, Saturday and yesterday, I ever saw at this season. On Saturday, sitting for an hour in the lane under Knight's Hill, the ground covered with gossamer, all the fields rippling with a stream of sunshine like a lake, yet no perceptible wind."

IV

(1859)

"The winter was spent mainly," says Ruskin of 1858–1859, "in trying to get at the mind of Titian; not a light winter's task." [1] But he had much else on hand—a paper for the Social Science Congress, the address at Cambridge, a second letter to Acland on the Oxford Museum. There were friends across the sea who rejoiced in his activity and growing influence. "Go on again," wrote Robert Browning, "like the noble and dear man you are to us all, and especially to us two out of them all. Whenever I chance on an extract, a report, it lights up the dull newspaper stuff wrapt round it, and makes me glad at heart and clearer in head." [2] Then came the lectures at Manchester and Bradford, as already related (p. 439). His father regretted all this dispersion of energy, and the delay which it caused to the completion of *Modern Painters*. But for a little tour which he worked in with the lectures in the North Ruskin was able to make a good plea: he was continuing his studies in Turnerian Topography:—

"Bolton Bridge (*February* 25, 1859).—This is just a splendid place, and never was there so true a drawing as our Bolton. The hills are just about five times as high as they really are, but they are

[1] Preface to *Modern Painters*, vol. v.

[2] *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 1897, vol. ii. pp. 300, 302.

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enlargements of Facts, and more facts than the reality and the trees and shingle bank are all there."

"Bolton Bridge, *Tuesday* (*March* 1).—I am very sorry to stay away from home so long, but it is necessary for me to see these Yorkshire subjects, which I look upon as on the whole the chief tutors of Turner's mind, before finishing my fifth volume. His exaggerations are not entirely excusable, and it is very interesting to determine exactly where, and when, he first went wrong. He is to landscape precisely the kind of romance writer that Scott was to history, at once truer and falser than anybody else."

On returning home from this Yorkshire tour, Ruskin prepared for publication under the title *The Two Paths* the lectures he had recently given, and next wrote his *Academy Notes*. Then he was ready for another Continental tour. It was to be the last on which his parents accompanied him, and before they reached their favourite haunts in Savoy and Switzerland they broke new ground. Ruskin had been asked somewhat pointedly by the National Gallery Site Commission in 1857 whether he had "recently been at Dresden" or was "acquainted with the Munich Gallery." He had never been to either place. This omission he felt bound to repair. Moreover he was now particularly anxious, in connexion with his studies of Titian, to see the works of that master in the German galleries. They went accordingly by Brussels to Cologne, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Dresden, and Munich, and Ruskin's diary is mainly occupied with notes on the pictures at these places. At Dresden, he was especially delighted with the Family Group by Paolo Veronese, which is described in the fifth volume. A careful copy of a portion of the picture, which he made at this time, is preserved at Brantwood.

Of the Munich Gallery, also, Ruskin made notes, accompanied, as usual, by many pen-and-ink sketches; he made, too, a careful water-colour copy of the little girl in one of Vandyck's portrait-pieces. With the Berlin Gallery—alike in its arrangement and its contents—he was much delighted. Among its greatest treasures he reckoned Holbein's portrait of George Gyzen; this he described in his paper on "Sir

Joshua and Holbein."[1] A general impression of the Gallery, with an account of this German tour generally, is given in letters to artist-friends:— CHAP. XXV.

(*To* CLARKSON STANFIELD.) "DRESDEN, 23*rd June* [1859].—Time goes fast when it is travel spent, and I am ashamed to think how long it is since we left home, and I have not told you—as you said you would like me to do—what adventures we have met with in the disturbed state of the Continent. In the first place, we met with a very excited old gentleman in Brunswick, who told us the French were in Milan, and looked at us fiercely as if he thought it was our fault. We told him it wasn't, and that we wanted the sexton to let us into the Cathedral, upon which the old gentleman went to get him for us; and in the second place, we saw fifteen thousand fighting men in helmets of this shape [sketch] (the ornament at the top being in appearance a hall candlestick and its function a ventilator) march past Prince Frederick William at Berlin. We were smothered in dust, and very late in getting breakfast, but the fifteen thousand candlestick men did us no other harm. In the third place, we heard the Austrian National Hymn played three times over to some people in a tea-garden in Hanover, but no popular movement followed. And in the last place, five boys in paper caps made a very disagreeable noise for three-quarters of an hour in a back lane under my window at Berlin, one evening, which I have reason to think was intended for an imitation of Prussian military music playing national airs. I have no remembrance at present of any other inconvenience resulting from the disturbed state of the Continent. I was thinking of you yesterday as we were watching a ferry-boat cross the Elbe with a cart and horse in it, just one of the pretty little flat bits with a strong figure group which you like. . . ."

"THUN, *Aug.* 22. . . . Of the frescoes at Munich, Kaulbach's are the most ludicrous, Cornelius's the most atrocious. Hess's the least excusable—for he might have been a painter but for his vanity, while Kaulbach and Cornelius never could have painted under any circumstances. But enough of them."

(*To* GEORGE RICHMOND.) "MUNICH, 15*th July* [1859]. . . . Never in my life have I yet been thrown into such a state of

[1] *Cornhill Magazine*, March 1860; reprinted in *On the Old Road*.

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hopeless and depressing disgust as by this journey in Germany. The intense egotism and ignorance of the modern German painter (in his work) is unspeakable in its offensiveness. The eternal vanity and vulgarity mistaking itself for Piety and poetry—the intense deadness to all real beauty, puffed up into loathsome caricatures of what they fancy to be German character—the absorption of all love of God or man into their one itch of applause and Fine-doing, leave me infinitely more sorrowful than the worst work of the French or Italians. In France one gets some really vigorous Slaughter-house work—some sense of a low sort of beauty—some Natural concupiscence at least, if nothing else natural. But the German is too vain to enjoy *any*thing. I doubt not their painters are all excellent men. Virtuous—Domestic—amiable—kind—Cream of everything—Fancy cream of everything mashed up in a bowl—with an entire top of Rotten eggs—and you have the moral German art with its top of vanity. . . ."

Ruskin's visit to Nuremberg during this tour made a strong impression on him; it is reflected both in the text and in the illustrations of the fifth volume. From Nuremberg he went to Munich, and thence to Schaffhausen. Writing to Professor Norton from that place (July 31), he refers to the conclusion of *Modern Painters*:—

"I am at work upon it, in a careless, listless way—but it won't be the worse for the different tempers it will be written in. There will be little or no bombast in it, I hope, and some deeper truths than I knew—even a year ago."

"I was up at three," he says in the same letter, "to watch the dawn on the spray of the Fall." Next he spent a month in the Bernese Oberland; and then leaving his parents for a while at Geneva, he went yet again to his beloved valley of Chamouni. There, as usual, he worked hard at the rocks; but his diary shows that his thoughts were turned also to other subjects. There is the beginning, for instance, of an essay on Political Economy. His habitual study of the Bible took the form of notes on St. Matthew's Gospel, and an essay on Faith. His literary companion was Dante.

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After ten days in Paris, Ruskin reached home early in October 1859. A little later he went on a visit to Miss Bell's school at Winnington,[1] where he worked upon *The Elements of Perspective*, and then there was no further interruption until *Modern Painters* was finished. The fifth, and final, volume was issued in June 1860. The volume was written, in a sense, under pressure—the closest and most compelling that could have been applied—the pressure of entreaty from his father. Ruskin described it in one of his Oxford lectures.[2] His father had seen him collecting materials for fifteen years and was weary of waiting for the conclusion. It was by the first volume of *Modern Painters* that his son had leapt into fame; it would be by this great work, the father thought, that the fame would be most securely established. He yearned to see, before he died, the end crown the work. Accordingly "when he came home from the long journey of 1859 and found signs of infirmity increasing upon him, he said to me one day, 'John, if you don't finish that book now I shall never see it.' So I said I would do it for him forthwith, and did it—as I could."

V

"As I could, not as I would"; perhaps Ruskin, as he wrote, was thinking of this motto of the most minute and conscientious of Flemish painters. The world of art and letters is under some debt to the father who thus constrained his son; for whether, if left to himself, Ruskin would ever have finished his book at all, may well be doubted. His industry was prodigious, but it was equalled by his curiosity, and he lacked the habit of concentration. Moreover, his mind was at this time becoming increasingly absorbed in quite other questions than those which were immediately involved in the concluding parts of *Modern Painters*. One sees what was to come in several passages in the fifth volume. Thus, in discussing the effect upon the human mind of

[1] See ch. vi. in the next volume.

[2] *Readings in "Modern Painters."*

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beauty in art, he refers to the unsettlement of his convictions, and to his doubts of "the just limits of the hope in which he may permit himself to continue to labour in any course of Art." And so, again, his discussions of painters and pictures were, he tells us, "continually altered in shape, and even warped and broken, by digressions respecting social questions, which had for me an interest tenfold greater than the work I had been forced into undertaking." At the end of the volume we see the transition towards economic questions in progress. He is ostensibly still discussing the choice of subjects and ideas in pictures; but the inquiry leads him to consider "the right economy of labour." In the summer which saw the publication of this fifth volume, the digressions established themselves as Ruskin's first preoccupation. If it had not been for his father's pressure, Ruskin might have been caught in the maelstrom of economics before *Modern Painters* had been finished at all. The book may thus be said to be a monument of a double allegiance—of devotion to his master, Turner, and also of devotion to his father, of whose shrewdness, affection, and good sense the reader of the correspondence in this biography must already, I think, have received a strong impression. The force of the motive derived from the defence of Turner was by this time spent. Ruskin's advocacy had won the case, but had won it too late, for Turner had passed "beyond these voices." Nor was that all. It was a main object with Ruskin to teach that "all great art depended on nobleness of life." What he had gathered of Turner's life had not shaken his conviction: but it had suggested the difficulty of proving it in a case where the gold was so much mixed with the clay. "I knew his life had been noble," said Ruskin in after years, "but not in ways that I could convince others of, and it seemed to me that all my work had been in vain." [1] And there were other difficulties which beset the completion of his task. He described them in his Preface; and we must take note of them here, for the discussion will serve to bring out some characteristics of the volume.

First, then, Ruskin had to resume threads which had

[1] See, again, *Readings in "Modern Painters."*

been dropped for some time. It is not indeed to be supposed that the whole of this volume was composed during the winter of 1859–60. Some portions were written, in first draft, at the same time with the fourth volume. Other portions were written at Turin in 1858. "I get now," he wrote to his father (July 27), "a good many spare half-hours for thinking over *Modern Painters*, and sometimes doing a little, and hope soon to get into the run of it. It will be a finished, I hope *glowing* volume, but perhaps a little less sparkling than younger ones." But the whole material had to be sifted and rearranged; this process was laborious, and may well have been disheartening. For the longer he had worked and studied, the more conscious he became of the amount of work and study which remained to be done. The scheme of the treatise required him in this final volume to deal successively with Beauty of Water, Beauty of Vegetation, and Beauty of Sky. With Beauty of Mountains he had dealt in the preceding volume, and the subject had occupied him for 338 pages. And these discussions were only subdivisions of Ideas of Beauty; the whole subject of Ideas of Relation remained to be treated also. Had the full scheme been carried out on the scale of the discussion of Mountain Beauty, there had been no counting of the volumes which should have been written. The first step was to throw some of the cargo overboard. "I cut away," he wrote to Dr. John Brown, "half of what I had written." The proposed section on Sea Beauty was given up altogether, as Ruskin explains in the Preface. Next, he found it impossible to deal as exhaustively as he had desired with Beauty of Vegetation. He had, indeed, for many years been a diligent botanist; understanding by the term botany the study of the aspects of flowers. With their laws of growth he was not familiar; this was a new subject of inquiry, and with Ruskin to take up a new subject meant to turn upside down anybody else's treatment of it. "Many of the results" of his inquiry into "the origin of wood" could "only be given," he says, "if ever, in a detached form." Some of these results he gave in the year following the publication of the fifth volume in a lecture at the Royal Institution on "Tree Twigs." This

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lecture, though containing some further illustrations, corresponded in method and in spirit with the chapters in the fifth volume. There was in it the same close study of natural aspects combined with poetical fancy, and the same imaginative connexion of those aspects with ideas of morality and mythology. The poetry of the leaf-aspects, as Ruskin draws it out in those chapters, might serve as a commentary on Shelley's lines:—

> "No sister-flower would be forgiven
> If it disdained its brother."

Ruskin, as Froude well remarks, had the gift of converting the minutest observations of natural phenomena into a poem.[1] Very characteristic of Ruskin is the division and subdivision of plants, with names for the categories which are themselves felicities of poetical observation—the division into (A) Tented Plants, so called because they pass as the tented Arab passes, leaving no memorial of themselves: and (B) Building Plants—builders because it is by the work of the leaves that the tree is built up; and then the subdivision, as of (B) into (*a*) Shield builders, and (*β*) Sword builders: according as the leaves resemble broad shields, or sharp swords. His method, at once discursive and comprehensive, was characteristically hit off by Carlyle, who had heard the lecture on "Tree Twigs":—

"Friday last," he wrote to his brother John (April 23, 1861), "I was persuaded—in fact had unwarily compelled myself, as it were—to a lecture of Ruskin's at the Institution, Albemarle Street—lecture on Tree Leaves as physiological, pictorial, moral, symbolical objects. A crammed house, but tolerable to me even in the gallery. The lecture was thought to 'break down,' and indeed it quite did '*as a lecture*'; but only did from *embarras des richesses*—a rare case. Ruskin did blow asunder as by gunpowder explosions his leaf notions, which were manifold, curious, genial; and, in fact, I do not

[1] *Carlyle's Life in London*, 1885, vol. ii. p. 245, where also the following letter is printed.

recollect to have heard in that place any neatest thing I liked so well as this chaotic one."[1] CHAP. XXV.

With the next subject of his inquiry—"Of Cloud Beauty"—Ruskin was entirely at home; but here, too, the more he knew the more he became conscious of the depth of the unknown. Looking back upon his work some years later he said that *Modern Painters* was "a mere sketch of intention, in analysis of the forms of cloud and wave": there were not enough scientific data, he said, to render the analysis complete.[2] The note of diffidence which makes itself heard in this volume was finely commented upon by one of its most sympathetic readers at the time:—

"Such a sky! Such films and threads of infinite tenuity! Such flat roofs of cirri, lying high up in perspective, beyond the reach of science! Ruskin's 'don't know' in the last volume about clouds is very manly and noble after his spouterism in the first volume of *Modern Painters* on the same subject. There he spoke as if he had 'entered into the Springs of the Sea'; 'walked in search of the Depth'; 'seen the treasures of the Snow, the treasures of the Hail,' and 'by which way the light is parted,' and 'the way for the lightning of thunder,' and knew whether the 'rain had a father, and who had begotten the drops of dew and had numbered the clouds of heaven.' I love him more for the subdued, reverential, renunciatory tone of his last writings, which come not from less knowledge but more wisdom."[3]

Again, under the head of clouds, Ruskin did not get all done that he had intended. "I may, perhaps, some day," he said,

[1] Another note on this lecture, though at second hand, is given in the *Letters of James Smetham* (p. 94): "I went," he writes, "to Gilchrist's on Saturday. Found him living next door to Carlyle. The day before he had gone with C. to hear Ruskin lecture at the Royal Institution. (Carlyle kept inquiring the time every ten minutes, and at last said, 'I think he ought to give over now.') Ruskin is a favourite of his, or he would not have gone at all, for he hates art in reality; but R. sent him a ticket. Gilchrist and several others we heard of thought the lecture a failure; but C. would not add the weight of his opinion to this, whatever he might think." Ruskin himself speaks of the failure as "gnawing" him.

[2] *Eagle's Nest*, § 129.

[3] *Letters of James Smetham*, 1891, p. 97.

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"systematise and publish my studies of clouds separately." The studies were to be accompanied by numerous illustrations, for which his sketch-books and diaries would have afforded abundant material. This plan was not carried out; though it would perhaps have been in some measure fulfilled, if his health had allowed him to continue the publication of *Cœli Enarrant*—a collection of passages dealing with the clouds, of which only one part appeared (1885). In connexion with it Ruskin had been in correspondence with Sir Oliver Lodge, and he looked forward to revising his chapters in the light of his friend's scientific knowledge. That was not to be; and in the chapters as they stand, Ruskin leaves open many questions which, had he been able to complete his revision, he might have treated differently. Just when his pen had to be laid aside, he felt that he was beginning to learn. "This has been a very bright day to me," he wrote to Miss Kate Greenaway on June 26, 1885. "I've found out why clouds float, for one thing!!! and think what a big thing that is." And again, on June 29:—

> "Clouds are warmer and colder according to the general temperature of the air, but always enable the sun to warm the air within them in the fine weather, when they float high. I have yet to learn all about the wet weather on this new condition myself."

The Part in the fifth volume treating "Of Cloud Beauty" introduces a new note in Ruskin's work, which was henceforth often to recur. In connexion with his cloud-studies, and also with the mythological interest which was strongly shown in many of Turner's pictures, Ruskin was led to the examination of Greek myths. Their physical and their moral significance alike attracted him; and the studies, commenced in the last volume of *Modern Painters*, were afterwards continued in *The Queen of the Air*, as well as in some minor essays. A glance at the titles which he gave to Plates in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* will show the fascination which the subject had for him—the rain-clouds became "The Graiæ," the storm-clouds "Medusa" or "The Locks of Typhon"; the fading splendour of Giorgione's fresco, "The Hesperid Æglé." There will be more to say on this

subject when we come to what Ruskin called his "Myth Book"; but here we may note from his diaries how constant during these years of preparation for the present volume had been his classical studies. The *Clouds* of Aristophanes had long been a favourite play. During the summer of 1858 he read "three or four times over in two months" the *Plutus*—a reading which was suggestive in many ways. But meanwhile it gave him, he says, "disgust with himself, for not knowing Greek enough to translate it." This is a piece of self-depreciation which need not be taken too literally; for his diary shows that he studied the play deeply, analysing its characters, discussing its purpose, and collecting from it passages illustrative of Greek life and thought. In the fifth volume we may note the beginning of that minute study of words which he carried forward in *Munera Pulveris* and elsewhere. In plunging, perhaps with inadequate equipment, into the perilous sea of etymological derivation, it may be that fancy, or *prima facie* impressions, sometimes led him astray. But, though he troubled himself with little *apparatus classicus*, he read his books over and over again, and noted carefully any allusion, suggestion, or usage which fitted in with his own line of thought. Of commentaries on the classics he made very little use, and (during the Continental journeys on which much of his work was done) even an adequate supply of the harmless, necessary dictionaries was not always at hand; his work was all done for himself.

The next Part in the volume—that which deals with "Invention Formal," or, in more common parlance, with Composition in art—though it contains some of the most acute of Ruskin's analyses of Turner's work, is hardly on the same scale of thoroughness as other parts of the work. Here, again, the author seems to have been in some measure oppressed by his subject. He had sometimes been supposed to slight the quality of composition in pictures; it was, he says, on the contrary the quality which, above all others, gave him delight; but the more he studied it, the more difficult of exposition did it turn out to be. When he began the volume it is clear that he meant the section on Composition to be much fuller than it ultimately became. Thus in

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one of the chapters on Vegetation he introduces Plates from Turner's "Richmond," as it were incidentally, remarking that what he has "chiefly to say of them belongs to our section on Composition"; but such principal discussion did not get itself said. When he came to the place he finds that the subject is too large, and in part hardly susceptible of analysis except by the method of actual copying of the works of great composers. But here, too, his habit of dispersing himself over various books must be remembered. He had already dealt with the subject of composition—very methodically and suggestively, if incompletely—in *The Elements of Drawing*. The student of Ruskin should, therefore, read together those pages and these on the same subject in *Modern Painters*. Among the inquiries which, under the head of "Invention Formal," Ruskin had intended to take up was that of "the effects of colour-masses in juxtaposition";[1] but this subject also he put aside: its treatment would have delayed the appearance, and increased the bulk, of the volume.

The last Part of the volume deals with "Invention Spiritual"; that is to say, with those "Ideas of Relation" which pictures may convey by their "choice of subject and the mode and order of its history." The subject is endless; and Ruskin said, in after years, that though he had finished *Modern Painters*, it had no conclusion.[2] It is clear that here, also, he largely curtailed his original scheme; but these final chapters contain, nevertheless, as they stand, much that is the most instructive in all his criticism, whether of art or of life; much also that is finest in expression. The chapters,[3] in which he traces the outlook of men in successive ages upon problems of death and destiny, are more than a history of "ideas of relation" in art—full of suggestion though they are from this point of view; but they are also, as a reviewer said at the time of their first appearance, "a splendid rhapsody on human progress."[4] What Ruskin said of the volume, in the

[1] See his statement in the paper entitled "The Black Arts," Library Edition, vol. xiv. p. 362.

[2] See, again, *Readings in "Modern Painters."*

[3] Viz., pt. ix. ch. ii. to ch. ix.

[4] "Shirley" in *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1860, p. 729.

letter already quoted — that it would be "glowing" if "perhaps a little less sparkling"—is here pre-eminently true; and the altered note marks the transition to his later style—a style which has been characterised by Professor Norton; the diction is "simpler, less elaborate, for the most part less self-conscious"; the "purple patches" are less frequent, but "its whole substance is crimsoned with the passionate feeling that courses through the eager and animated words."[1] The sentences tend to become shorter; the argument is more concentrated; the points are closer packed; and the images or allusions are brought from a wider range and charged more fully with meaning; the epithets are less frequent, but each of them throbs with intensity. The descriptions of Venice may be cited as instances of compression; as this: "Fearless, faithful, patient, impenetrable, implacable, — every word a fate—sate her senate." Or this, for a picture in a short sentence: "Ethereal strength of Alps, dreamlike, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore; blue islands of Paduan hills, poised in the golden west." And the reader will perhaps bear with me for quoting here the final passage of the book—characteristic of some of the points just noticed with regard to its style, characteristic also of the passion of humanity which was now to enfold and supplement Ruskin's study of art:—

"'Thy kingdom come,' we are bid to ask then! But how shall it come? With power and great glory, it is also written; and yet not with observation, it is also written. Strange kingdom! Yet its strangeness is renewed to us with every dawn.

"When the time comes for us to wake out of the world's sleep, why should it be otherwise than out of the dreams of the night? Singing of birds, first, broken and low, as, not to dying eyes, but eyes that wake to life, 'the casement slowly grows a glimmering square"; and then the gray, and then the rose of dawn; and last the light, whose going forth is to the ends of heaven.

[1] Introductions to the American "Brantwood" editions of *Val d'Arno* and *Sesame and Lilies*.

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"This kingdom it is not in our power to bring; but it is, to receive. . . . The simoom-dragon may still be served if we will, in the fiery desert, or else God walking in the garden, at cool of day. Coolness now, not of Hesperus over Atlas, stooped endurer of toil; but of Heosphorus over Sion, the joy of the earth. The choice is no vague nor doubtful one. High on the desert mountain, full descried, sits throned the tempter, with his old promise—the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. He still calls you to your labour, as Christ to your rest;—labour and sorrow, base desire, and cruel hope. So far as you desire to possess, rather than to give; so far as you look for power to command, instead of to bless; so far as your own prosperity seems to you to issue out of contest or rivalry, of any kind, with other men, or other nations; so long as the hope before you is for supremacy instead of love; and your desire is to be greatest, instead of least;—first, instead of last:—so long you are serving the Lord of all that is last, and least;—the last enemy that shall be destroyed—Death; and you shall have death's crown, with the worm coiled in it; and death's wages, with the worm feeding on them; kindred of the earth shall you yourself become: saying to the grave, 'Thou art my father'; and to the worm, 'Thou art my mother, and my sister.'

"I leave you to judge, and to choose, between this labour, and the bequeathed peace; these wages, and the gift of the Morning Star; this obedience, and the doing of the will which shall enable you to claim another kindred than of the earth, and to hear another voice than that of the grave, saying, 'My brother, and sister, and mother.'"

VI

The publication of the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, concluding the work, attracted very general attention in the press, and called forth a chorus of congratulation, the more noticeable by contrast with the chorus of condemnation which was to greet the author's next appearance in the literary arena. "No author of our day," wrote a reviewer of the time, "has at once excited more admiration, and yet been assailed with more vehement censure than John

Ruskin."[1] But by this time he had conquered most of his assailants.[2] "He has outlived," wrote another critic, "and outwritten the obloquy and abuse that once assailed him; and while yet in the prime of life has attained the proud position of one of the greatest of all writers, living or dead, on the subject of art."[3] Now that the treatise was at last finished, and its full scope revealed, the grandeur of the task was appreciated. The general verdict was expressed by a literary journal which had published much bitter depreciation of the author's earlier volumes. "Our duty is," said the *Athenæum*, "to report that the work is well, admirably, and nobly done. In method, single, clear, and as a whole eloquent to a marvel, as the world knows; and taken in the mass, these five volumes contain the most valuable contributions to art-literature the language can show." It was a work, wrote another reviewer (not hitherto favourable), not only of criticism, but of poetical creation. "Several poems in this closing volume," said "Shirley," "are superb. There is a grand song about the Pine, such as some greybeard bard in the Halls of Horsa might have sung; a glorious Greek hymn of Death and Resurrection; idylls about the leaves and the lichen and the mosses; an ode to Venice, blue and vivid as its own sea and sky. The very titles to the chapters are chosen by a poet." Various instances were given; and "here," said "Shirley" in conclusion, "we close our criticisms; and here (there having been strife between us) we must record our conviction that Mr. Ruskin has completed a book which is destined to live, and that this, its closing volume, is its flower and crown."

Upon the completion of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin's

[1] *The Christian Observer*, September 1862: an article on "John Ruskin as a Religious Writer," being a review of *Modern Painters* and his other works.

[2] *Blackwood's Magazine* was an exception. In an article signed "Peregrine" and entitled "A Day at Antwerp: Rubens and Ruskin" (September 1861), the fifth volume was noticed, and opportunity was taken to introduce a coarse personal attack upon the author. The reviewer was apparently proud of his bad taste, for the article was reprinted in 1874 (*Paradoxes and Puzzles*, by John Paget).

[3] *The Eclectic Review*, November 1860.

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reputation, if the voice of the public organs of opinion be the test, stood at its highest point. His literary career, as we have traced it in this volume, had been steadily progressive in popular applause. He had created the taste by which he was to be admired. His life, too, had on the whole been prosperous and rich in happiness. But already, by the time that the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* was in the hands of admiring readers, Ruskin was engaged in a new work which was to change praise into yet louder reprobation. We stand on the threshold, too, of a new era in his life. He was to know the fire of unfulfilled love and the cold of departing faith. He was to experience the bitterness of seeming failure; and his gifts of mind and heart were to die before his death. In the end, perhaps, he was to reach as Prophet a reputation higher than was now his as Writer: but it was to be "mixed with grey leaf and thorn-set stem: no fastening of diadem but with such sharp embroidery." [1]

[1] Introduction to *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

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